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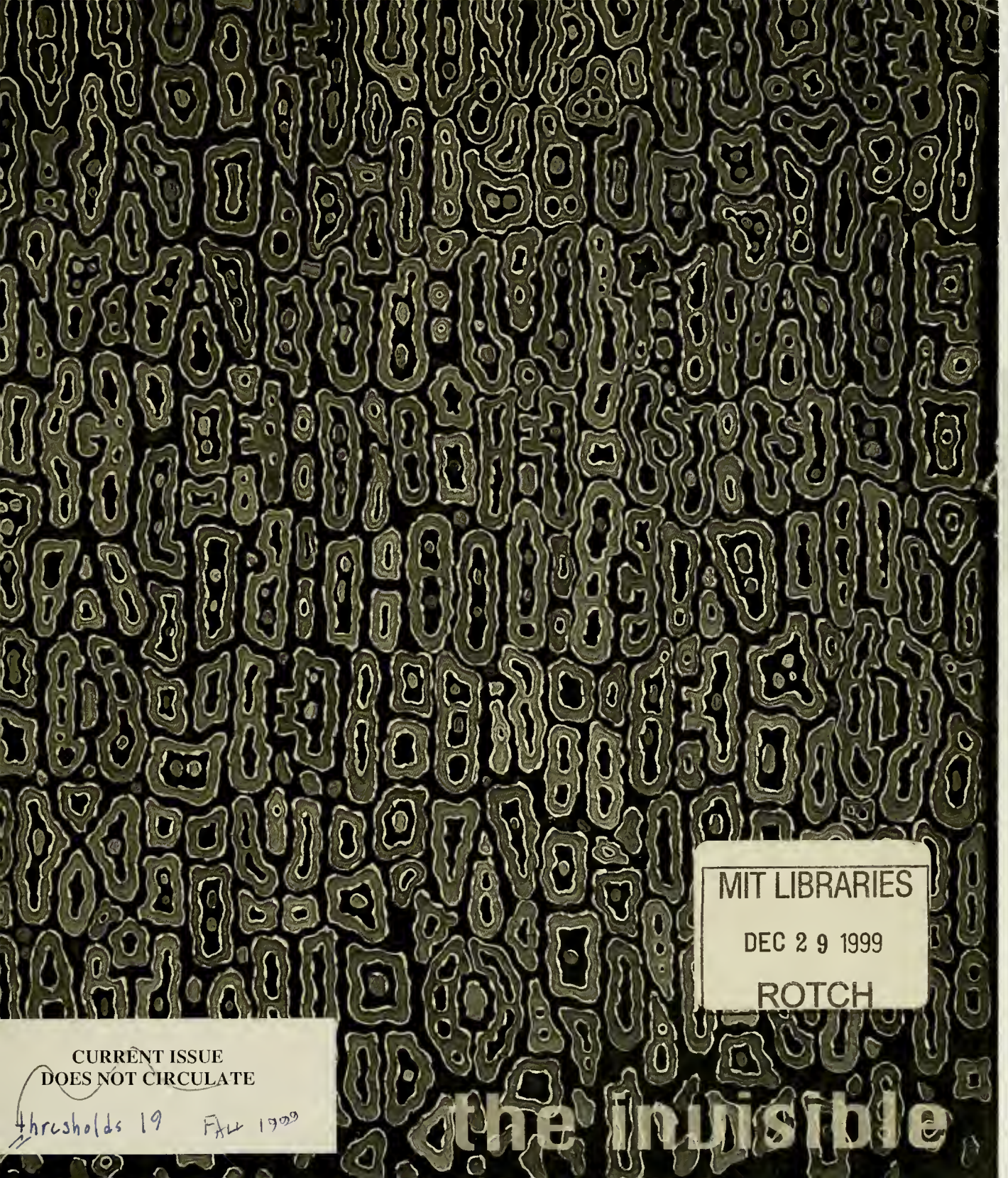

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# the invisible

01

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## editorial policy

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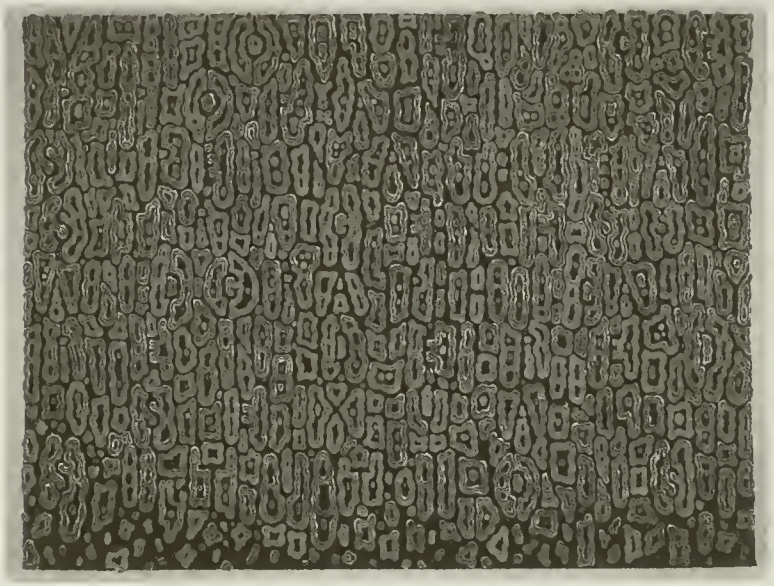


**BRUCE PEARSON**
*Violence, Profanity, Supernatural Strangeness and Graphically Rendered Sexual Situations*, 1997;
Oil and acrylic on styrofoam; 72 x 96 x 4 inches
Photo: Zindman/Fremont
Courtesy of Ronald Feldman Fine Arts Inc.

Pearson's paintings thrust themselves upon us with the immediacy of their visual and tactile impact, and only gradually reveal their meaning in the complicated layers of images and texts. He engages us in the visual appeal of his picture surfaces, and once he has our attention, gradually reveals complex layers of text and images. The title of the work in the cover, *Violence, Profanity, Supernatural Strangeness and Graphically Rendered Sexual Situations*, was a parental warning published as part of a New York Times film review. Drawing the text in extruded letters, he then flipped the image and overlaid the reversed texts to create an intricate pattern. He constructed the six-inch deep relief by carving the pattern into Styrofoam, one layer of text into the positive and vice versa, thus creating the painting's dark, brooding surface. Pearson's distortion of the text is not to obfuscate the communicative function of language, but to encourage a lengthy visual encounter that slows the hectic pace of modern life. The artist teases us with his pithy titles and challenges us to discover the hidden texts that present his perspectives on the ironies of contemporary society. Pearson's bold painted reliefs integrate idea, image, and text, thus creating *A New Visual Language*.

Joseph D. Ketner
Henry and Lois Foster Director
Rose Art Museum
Brandeis University

# Introduction

Stanford Anderson

The invisible. An improbable theme, perhaps, for a department involved in architecture, art, and, more generally, the material environment. But, of course, the improbable can be provocative, as it has been in this instance. In this issue of *Thresholds*, a range of authors and themes, appropriate to the range of the department, consider "the invisible" with cogency.

Nonetheless, the essays gathered here are not strictly about the invisible. Resorting to a dictionary, I find two meanings for *invisible*: "incapable by nature of being seen" or "inaccessible to view."

Of the manuscripts available to me as I write this note, I find only two essays that touch on each of these definitions, and then not solely on these definitions. Francesca Rogier, when discussing the Schloss in Berlin, refers to a destroyed building that nonetheless is significant in the memory of many. It is so much incapable by nature of being seen that in the struggle for preferred memories in central Berlin it was reinvoked by a simulacrum — and this with the intent to thrust the People's Palace of the German Democratic Republic into just such a state of invisibility.



Diane Ghirardo, writing of female convents in sixteenth-century Italy, emphasizes their role in making girls and young women inaccessible to view. Yet the girls were also paraded, and the institutions were too prominent to have been invisible. Inaccessibility was achieved more by the rules and mores of the society than by architectural means.

The main thrust of the Rogier and Ghirardo essays joins with others in being not about invisibility, literally. What we encounter throughout these essays are states of mind. We might reverse the old saw, and say: Out of mind, out of sight. "It," that which is out of mind, is variously elaborated by our authors; it could as well be, or is willed to be, "invisible."

The McNulty/Otis Stevens house in Liane Lefaivre's article was recently destroyed. It, like the Schloss, must now rely on memory in the struggle with invisibility. The larger point, however, is how changing critical sensibilities had rendered this house invisible while it stood — and thus also facilitated its destruction. For Ghirardo and the convents, it is a historiographic amnesia that renders both people and institutions invisible.

In Berlin, Schloss and People's Palace vie with one another with the stakes being alternative invisibilities in currently contested memories and politics. Zissis Kotionis's tale is still more direct in describing states of mind that control what may be seen: Out of mind, out of sight. In this regard, Alfredo Jaar and his work are compelling: a visual artist who, in this time of sensory overload, withholds the visual, seeking to engage our minds in order that we may, perhaps, once again *see*.

The architectural counterpart of Jaar's work may be seen in Dimitris Pikionis's paths ascending to the Acropolis, described by Alex Tzonis. Tzonis speaks of an "invisible architecture," but finally admits this is merely a metaphor. What he finds in Pikionis is a resistance to the idolatry of the object, as was manifest in so much modern architecture of the post-war years. Instead, Pikionis's is understated; he weaves his work into the landscape, creating not an invisible architecture, but rather what Tzonis calls the weaving of "the invisible ties between architecture and the community." In this case, unlike other articles discussed, it is not the mind thrusting phenomena into invisibility, but rather the mind attuned to recognize what is invisible. Intellectual discussion might prepare the mind to seek such invisible ties, but they are confirmed only in compelling architectural experiences — in Pikionis's paths, yes, but also, pace Alex, the Acropolis too.

06

# the invisible

# The Other Parliament in the New/Old Berlin

Francesca Rogier

When the Reichstag, seat of the German parliament from 1889 to 1933, was re-dedicated as the new home of the Bundestag last April, another parliament building gazed vacantly westward from the foot of Unter den Linden. The *Palast der Republik*, the monolith overlooking Marx-Engels-Platz in the heart of Berlin that once housed the East German *Volkskammer*, might as well have been worlds away, so insignificant was its presence in the public's consciousness. But at precisely that moment, a shift may have taken place that could lead to a new perception and possible re-use of the forgotten parliament, just as it could engender a new definition of German identity.

The greatest moment for the Palast der Republik came in August 1990, when the first freely-elected representatives of the Volkskammer, a body previously subjugated to the central committee, voted for German unification. The representatives, now out of a job, promptly disbanded, while the state inherited the whole site. Shortly afterwards, officials from West Berlin detected high levels of asbestos contamination inside the Palast. They sealed it up almost immediately and have kept it off limits ever since. Given current plans calling for the reconstruction of part or all of the Kaiser's old imperial palace, or *Schloss*, which stood on the site until 1951, the future survival of the Palast is uncertain.
The multiple reasons behind the uncertainty extend beyond everyday technical issues to the intangibles of history, politics, and culture, which are so intertwined in post-Wall Berlin.

An ongoing and compelling drama, the Palast vs. Schloss dilemma is too complex to be adequately conveyed in brief. But it is a strange thing to observe how, in the district of Mitte, planners continue a drive to shrink spaces back to their "historic" outlines, roughly following one hundred-year-old maps. Not without certain manipulations: historic footprints and heights were stipulated for new buildings at Pariser Platz, and historic parceling was simulated for mixed-use buildings along Friedrichstrasse and to some extent on Unter den Linden. Still to come are a reduction of the width of Leipziger Strasse (from six to four lanes)

**Fig. 1** Aerial view of the Palast and the surrounding area. The 190 m long building, placed 180° to the former palace footprint, marks a sequence of open spaces moving east from Marx-Engels-Platz at the foot of Unter den Linden to the Marx-Engels-Forum, the 1969 TV tower, and Alexanderplatz. Wrapped in a marble base, the Palast's rear elevation makes contact with the Spree in a lateral walkway and boat landing, directly engaging the island site in a manner unusual for modernist buildings. Although plans for Marx-Engels-Platz never progressed past the stage of parking lot, it has proven to be an excellent outdoor space for carnivals, performance art, volleyball matches, attracting large crowds - the kind of public entertainments so often promoted today in city centers.

**Fig. 2** Palast der Republik; interior view of lobby (photo: Bundespresseamt). The main entrance frontally receives the axis of Unter den Linden (which glanced off of the palace facade), and from the asymmetrical, four-story lobby within, situated between the Volkskammer and large performance hall, visitors can gaze out at the city in a functional, if not architectonic, emulation of Schinkel's Altes Museum–here a glimpse of the GDR Foreign Ministry, an elongated high-rise slab which was demolished in 1995, making room for a possible reconstruction of Schinkel's Bauakademie.





and a return to the "historic" footprint of Alexanderplatz, albeit with high-rise towers springing from 12-story blocks. Much of this work is done in the name of repairing areas left open by the ruptures of war and subsequent reconstruction, when damaged landmarks were cleared away and replaced by modernist slabs and pavilions during the GDR era.

The strategy, now dubbed *Nachverdichtung* (infill or densification), was used rather selectively in the early years after unification to justify decisions to demolish a number of GDR structures.[1] But – less in response to popular will than to politics or economics – some decisions were revoked almost as quickly as they were made, and not all of the reasons have been voiced openly. These reversals also concerned plans for demolishing the Palast in 1993, which were suspended after the government retracted plans to redevelop the site for its own uses. The confusion caused the Bundestag budget committee to put off until 1998 the dispersal of funds allocated years earlier for the removal of the asbestos coating its massive steel girders, a necessary precaution regardless of whether the Palast is demolished or refurbished. Though scores of proposals have been made, there are no definite plans for building's renovation once the process is complete.

The main factors holding the Palast in limbo are more concerned with immaterial contamination: its architecture, with bronze-tinted mirrored glass typical of the mid-seventies and decidedly out of favor; its past service as a "people's palace" in a totalitarian regime; and its partial occupation of the footprint of the Schloss. Thus, to many people, it is redolent of the combined worst excesses of modernism and communism. For obverse (and equally subjective) reasons, the reconstruction of the Schloss, demolished in 1950 by the East German State, became particularly attractive in the conflicted post-Wall era. Its neoclassical facades, now finding praise as the epitome of *Berlinische Architektur*; its over 300-year history as the anchor of the city center; and, frankly, its link to the Wilhelmine era – a time that was not exactly a model of democracy but relatively stable in contrast to the more troubled times of Weimar, the Nazi regime, or the years of division.

[1] GDR buildings and spaces were deemed incompatible with any new development. The 1993 Spreeinsel urban design competition program rejected "additive strategies" outright. See *The Spreeinsel International Competition for Urban Design Ideas*, Phase 1 (Arbeitsgemeinschaft Wettbewerb Spreeinsel, 1993), pp. 44-49.

The illusion of stability and wholeness in the Schloss image seems to hold the greatest appeal for Berliners in the west, regardless of party line. A sense of wrongful loss at the hands of a communist regime magnified the illusion, adding an aura of innocence based on temporal neutrality. The feeling was powerful enough to sustain a false opposition in the Spreeinsel debate for some time, as if it were a choice between two existing buildings. In reality, the decision is between an expensive and indeterminate reconstruction of a richly ornamented, 700-room palace that evolved over centuries but no longer exists (except for its foundations), and for which there is no civic or state function and thus no public financing; or a barely twenty year old building, in need of asbestos removal and more repair with each day of disuse.

**Fig. 3** Aerial view of the Schloss before World War I.



Few dare to cite, much less defend, the architectural or spatial qualities of Graffunder's building. But doing so inevitably brings out reminders of the Cold War that are sometimes amusing and always interesting. Following the destruction of the Schloss, development on the Spreeinsel evolved from a proposal for a central state office tower, planned in the late fifties but never realized. An oblong pavilion was proposed for the site across the river in the sixties by Hermann Henselmann.[2] A team led by Hans Graffunder later adapted the idea to the Spreeinsel, completing the building in 1976.

[2] For a concise summary of proposals from the GDR period, see Harald Bodenschatz et al, *Berlin auf der Suche nach der verlorenen Mitte* (Junius Verlag: 1995), pp. 97-106; image p. 101.

Unlike the Reichstag, the Palast's role as parliament was secondary from the start. It was conceived as a kind of national community center, or *Volkshaus*, and a vast performance hall, which seats up to S,000, takes up most of the interior. Built with state of the art sound technology and a movable stage and seating, it can be adapted for anything from symphonies to boxing matches or dramatic plays. Dozens of paintings and sculptures were specially commissioned for the building; a steel and crystal "flower" sculture stands in its center. On its completion in 1976, the hauntingly familiar architecture of the Palast, which speaks the vocabulary of seventies high modernism with a slight "East Bloc" accent, was an object of ridicule and scorn in West Berlin–though somewhat hypocritically, since the city's other half was by no means free of such glitz. In East Berlin, with characteristically ironic humor, it was dubbed "Erich's Lamp Shop" for the glass globes crowding the ceiling of its vast lobby. It was also called the *Palazzo Prozzi* and the *Ballast der Republik*, underscoring its function as ideological showcase.

Yet the strategy at work here – long clean lines, simple massing, light but permanent materials, plazas with wide, open planes, and the integration of the fine arts – was employed in civic centers around the world. In fact, the Palast can arguably be placed within the genre of centers of national culture that includes the Kennedy Center and Aalto's Finlandia Hall, both built in the mid-seventies. It clearly harks back to the notion of a "New Monumentality" put forward in 1943 by Sigfried Giedion to guide modern architecture's expansion from the sphere of social housing and factories into the realm of representation and civic space.[3] But in the face of the political stigma of the GDR, such commonalities may be irrelevant.

[3] Sigfried Giedion, "The Need for Monumentality," in *New Architecture and City Planning*, ed. Paul Zucker (1944), pp. 549-569.

Viewing the discussion within the theme of collective memory is perhaps more to the point, if not necessarily easy to argue. What kind of memory does the Palast represent for East Germans? On the whole, they were quite aware of the dark presence lurking behind its gleam; nevertheless, they seem to have liked the place and have said so in opinion polls. The Palast was accessible and benign in contrast to neighboring party headquarters and executive ministries; a "transparency" by night, a mirror by day, it exuded an illusion of democratic normalcy, perhaps absurd in hindsight but doubtless *needed* to cope with everyday life in the Honnecker regime. The average *DDR-Bürger* could meet friends in the *Mokkabar*, attend a concert, eat a cheap meal, and mingle in the riverside pub any evening; there were scores of restaurants, large conference rooms, spaces for weddings, birthday parties, or even bowling – rarities in a parliament building. Occasional appearances by western artists, a connectivity to the outside world, carried on the illusion of normalcy, as did its materiality, an international blend of Belgian bronzed glass, Swiss large-screen projection systems, Austrian air conditioning, and, fatefully, British asbestos, with the rare luxury of real materials – genuine leather, porcelain, and crystal – in the plastic-and-vinyl world of the GDR.

It is the positive memory of these authenticities and the aura of community that motivates East Berliners to campaign for the preservation of the Palast. The *Verein zur Erhaltung des Palasts der Republik e.V.*, which has put up images of the Palast interior on the internet, points out that only one third was used for political functions, and that its cultural and social benefits make it worth salvaging. They argue that the building already

**Figs. 4 and 5** The reconstruction effort is led by Wilhelm von Boddien, a Hamburg industrialist. To gather support, in 1993 his group built a partial Schloss replica in painted canvas hung on a steel space frame, with mirrored panels extending the illusion onto the Palast itself, dematerializing and materializing all at once. Schloss history and alternative proposals were displayed inside. See catalog, *Das Schloss? Eine Ausstellung uber die Mitte Berlins* (Berlin: Ernst & Sohn, 1993). Aerial photo: Lother Willmann.

contains or could accommodate most of the uses being discussed for the site (the current list includes a hotel for state guests, a conference center, shops, exhibition space, and a university or city library). The group is even willing, somehow without any sense of irony, to entertain certain compromises, including reconstructing part of the Schloss.[4]

Other groups from the East are less enamored with the Schloss campaign: for them, it confirms their accusations of western colonization in much of the eastern sector. Colonization implies a dominant culture subjugating a weaker one, yet there is often a latent fear. The GDR was always a specter of "the other German as thief of one's own potential identity."[5] After the two mirror-image nations became one, the decades-old German question of political and cultural legitimacy was far from resolved; the unification provoked in the western psyche a re-assertion of the self that took the form of a defensive flight into history. As Andreas Huyssen noted, "the desire for history and memory may be a cunning form of defense," but it brings serious consequences for the capital, if not the nation as a whole.[6] The defensive stance of hesitant planners, who desire the security offered by history, brought about a condition of stagnation rather than evolution in the first generation of post-Wall projects. They singularly failed to grasp the potential for creative design unification presented, and thus were unable to address, through planning and architecture, the difficult political, social, and economic dilemmas it unleashed.

No wonder, then, that uncertainty still lingers on the Schlossplatz at the core of the city, while the future has long since been decided for nearly all other major sites.[7] On the other hand, uncertainty has a long tradition in Berlin, not only for sites supersaturated with history. The Reichstag, product of two controversial competitions in the late 19th century, is a classic example. Its earlier history as a parliament is marked by alternating scenes of triumph, infamy, disgrace, and proud defiance, from the speeches launching the Weimar Republik in 1918, the fire set by the Nazis in 1933, and the flag raised by conquering Soviet soldiers, to anti-blockade demonstrations in 1948. Renovation of the seriously damaged building, no longer housing a political institution, was postponed until 1954, when its symbolic and historic value prevailed against negative assessments of its aesthetics. Not until 1971 was the building reopened. It then languished in the shadow of the Wall for nearly two more decades.[8] When the Bundestag voted in June 1990 to uphold Berlin's constitutional designation as capital of a reunited Germany, the Reichstag came into focus at the heart of a new government center at the Spreebogen, where it is now framed against the massive bar of new buildings by Axel Schultes.

Sir Norman Foster's renovation of the Reichstag, with a new dome to replace the one damaged in the 1933 fire, stands out as a resounding success among many mediocre architectural works of the last decade. But controversy plagued every decision, from the design of the German eagle hung in the plenary hall to the color of the seating, to the very choice of the dome. Once again, a symbolic reading overshadowed aesthetic significance; the recreation of a dome was largely a concession to

4 The Verein (www.kultur-netz.de/palast.htm) is a small, underfunded group led by a woman named Liselotte Schulz.

5 Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia*, New York: Routledge, 1995, pp. 80-81.

6 Ibid., p. 91.

7 The name Schlossplatz originally designated a small area adjacent to the Schloss, but now indicates the entire Marx-Engels-Platz.

8 After it was renovated by Paul Baumgarten, it was used for conferences and exhibitions. See Michael Cullen, *Der Reichstag. Die Geschichte eines Monuments* (Berlin: Parkland, 1990).

**Fig. 6** First prize in the 1993 competition for the Reichstag, Sir Norman Foster, London (photo: A. Weibe, Bundesbaudirektion, Berlin).





a persistent group of historians, MPs, and dissenting jurors. They argued that without it the Reichstag was incomplete, a fragment that could not fully express the stability of the democratic institution it would now house. Foster had to exchange his domeless first prize design from 1993 (Fig. 6), a gigantic flat canopy supported above the entire Reichstag on huge columns, or risk losing the commission altogether.[9]

It may have been that without Christo's wrapping project, which momentarily released the Reichstag from the burden of history, Foster would have been forced to execute a historic replica. Certainly his idea of a roof terrace open to the public until late evening would have been more difficult to bring about had it not taken place. This event stirred post-Wall Berlin from its mesmerization with the past like no other; after years of lobbying, the two-week project took place in the brief interlude between the gutting of the building and the start of renovation. Many understood the wrapping as a way to redeem the building's murky past, a symbolic cleansing prior to its re-dedication as the new parliament, central to re-asserting the identity of the German nation. But others saw it as much more: the silvery shroud suspended the search for national identity just as it suspended time, place, and even everyday commercialism.[10] Millions from all over the world were transfixed in a moment of expectant wonder, blissfully free of cynicism and skepticism, nostalgia and sentimentality. As unlikely as it may seem, it was truly a moment of hiatus, filled with spontaneous music, dance, conversation, and art, and it opened up links to other actions, other possibilities yet to be discovered.

As landmarks from very different architectural periods corresponding to very different political contexts, the Reichstag, the Schloss, and the Palast have seemingly little in common. But they clearly share the experience of moving in and out of visibility as historic events change the filters of public perception, a function of their intimate and problematic relationship to national identity. Their interrelation is therefore worthy of deeper consideration. The Schloss no longer exists as a physical object, yet it exerts a phenomenal power as an image. This is largely because a group of people have invested it with the right to signify not

9 Newspapers recorded that some jury members encouraged Foster to emulate the dome from the third prize entry by Swiss architect Santiago Calatrava, sparking off even further debate.

10 Christo wisely insisted that all vendor and corporate advertisement be banned from a 1000 m radius around the building.

**Fig. 7** In search of a contemporary expression for the dome rather than a replica of the "Kaiser's helmet," Foster spent a year working out over forty variations. The outcome is a skeletal steel cage clad in transparent glass, armed with a rotating solar reflector, that strikes an amazingly graceful balance with the solid mass of the building.



only the city but the German people – a role denied to the Palast, which doubtless represents "the other German as thief of one's own potential identity." Nor is this role granted to any work of contemporary architecture. They do not seem troubled by the classic question of preservation and reconstruction – whether, even if a "faithful reconstruction" were possible, a Schloss replica would (or should) hold the same power as the original object. And surprisingly little weight is given to the fact that the Palast and the space it overlooks are still part of active memory for a large segment of the population; very few living Berliners can claim this of the Schloss.

What is even more fascinating is that the Berlin administration recently gave an official nod to a half-replica of the Schloss, a simulated fragment placed before (or grafted onto) the Palast.[11] In the absence of a public use for the building, the hybrid scheme must be financed by private developers, but, provided some could be found, they would almost certainly demand *state subsidy* and would still utilize it primarily as commercial space: a downtown shopping mall or possibly an exclusive hotel. Does the fact that such an idea is taken seriously attest to the amazing power of the Schloss image, which is more powerful than it was when the Hohenzollern emperors lived there? Or is this apparent power a more basic expression of the desire for a national symbol? Since Germans of all backgrounds have strong reservations about any form of nationalism, the suggestion might be troubling. Yet whether it is deemed appropriate, out-of-date, or immoral, this desire is very persistent. It is manifested in the new rituals and celebrations that regularly press the Brandenburg Gate into service. And so it is indicative that since its re-inauguration into public life, public events are now increasingly taking place on the steps of the Reichstag.

In fact, the overwhelmingly positive reception of Foster's Reichstag project may dislodge the stalemate between the Palast and the Schloss. Escaping the often mundane state of historic reconstruction, it deploys a dynamic symbolic and spatial relation between capital city and state – two historically hostile entities. The panorama opening up from the spiraling promenades takes in, as *Der Spiegel* quickly registered, both "the whole of unhealable German history" and the spaces in flux: the

[11] Statement released August 13, 1999 by the Senate for Urban Development implementing the recent *Planwerk Innenstadt* proposals for the inner city. Purists on either side of the debate do not support it, though variations have circulated for several years, including one proposed by Graffunder prior to his death in 1996.

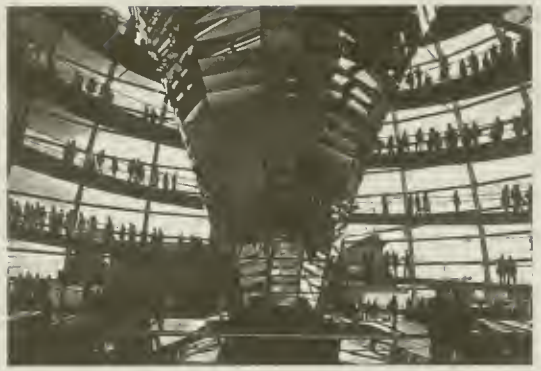


**Fig. 8** Interior view of the Reichstag dome (photo: author). Within the dome, a huge funnel, elaborately facetted with mirrors, penetrates several stories to the plenum below. A machine for reflecting light downwards, it creates fragmented reflections of visitors above. Together with the interiors below, refurbished in a straightforward, elegant way, the result is at once authentically new, yet authentically old, playful yet ceremonial and possibly even timeless. Foster's synthesis also preserved the essence of his original scheme of a rooftop space where voters could see into the plenum below and be seen by their elected representatives. A literalizing of democracy in answer to Bonn's insistence on "transparency." In the end, the gaze inward was somewhat obstructed to placate anxious MPs, but their own view is very clear, insuring a constant awareness of a public presence, so that the relation is not entirely relegated to the symbolic.





Holocaust memorial site, the Russian war memorial, and the Gedächtniskirche; Potsdamer Platz, Leipziger Platz, Lehrter Bahnhof, and Alexanderplatz.[12] Because this landscape of change is seen from a moving, rather than a fixed, point of view, the traditional relations of space, monument, and subject are altered in a manner that transcends the dilemmas of history and memory that the Reichstag must sustain. Moreover, the inhabited dome and its mirror-facetted core create a public space of perpetual motion and light, undermining the static qualities of the archetype. It is a living, breathing contrast to the solidity and stability of the traditional monument (just as the mirrored funnel undermines the image of the intact self).

[12] "Labor der Zukunft," *Der Spiegel* (September 6, 1999), pp. 34-38.

Though the Reichstag's transformation focused a great amount of public attention, its success was virtually unanticipated in Berlin's *Planungskultur*. Few seemed willing to invest in either its architectural or symbolic potential. The Schlossplatz has been the primary site of contestation in the post-Wall "battle for the German soul" among different projections of "golden moments of the past."[13] But the significance of Reichstag's rebirth – for which Christo's project doubtless played spiritual midwife – has already been registered in the national media. *Der Spiegel* reported last summer that provincial and cynical Berlin is moving into a new era of dynamism. It proclaimed with a certain sense of relief that "German democracy is clearly expressed in the Reichstag" and that its new dome is now "the symbol of the Berliner Republik."[14]

[13] Jane Kramer, "Designs on Berlin," *New Yorker* (July 6, 1999), p. 55.

[14] *Der Spiegel* (September 6, 1999).

When the understanding that the Reichstag has greater symbolic potential than the Schloss fully percolates through the local planning scene, the Schlossplatz may finally be liberated from the grip of false opposition. With the ghost of the Schloss laid to rest, it may even be possible to rework the Palast der Republik in the same spirit in which the Reichstag transcended its difficult history. For nearly half of its short existence, the Palast has silently entered the memory of a new generation as bronze backdrop to a remarkable parade of events and objects, from Christmas carnivals and music performances to volleyball matches on sand and giant New Age pyramids. If the Spreeinsel's representational function as civic and national space can now be reopened to interpretation, other buildings could be added to the site which are not bound to the Schloss footprint. Before it is "unwrapped" from its inner skin of asbestos, it is high time to rethink the Palast der Republik, allowing room for play, the unexpected, and the new.

# Pikionis and the Transvisibilty

Alex Tzonis

**Fig. 1** Sketch by Dimitris Pikionis.

Two major conflicting cultural tendencies have been present in history throughout different socioeconomic systems, whether tribal, feudal, or capitalistic. The one adores objects for their material identity, their visual qualities, values them as things to possess and to consume, and regards them as ends in themselves. The other is oblivious to their material identity and their visual qualities and considers them only means towards serving higher ends. The concepts of idolatry, fetishism, iconoclasm, and more recently "dematerialization" have emerged out of this incessant conflict.



The context of this ideological confrontation is important in order to understand the significance of the web of paths, or simply the "Paths" as we will call the project here, ascending to the Acropolis and to the summit of Philopappos Hill in Athens (1950-1957). This project, designed by Greek architect Dimitris Pikionis, is considered to be one of the most important architectural works of this century. With this project, Pikionis appears to be on the side of the "invisible," positing himself decidedly against idols, spectacles, and fetishes, as we understand these terms today. In this article, we will not delve into an analysis of the theological, economic, or psychoanalytic parameters this project; rather, we will examine succinctly the unique architectural strategies of the invisible developed by Pikionis and the specific context within which they appeared.

At first glance, Pikionis seems to be a backward-looking, late nineteenth

century nostalgic and post-Romantic regionalist involved in minor projects in a minor country. Many people even in his own country still think of him as such an architect. Indeed, Pikionis built very little, wrote even less, and spent most of his life in a peripheral region without any affiliations to major institutions devoted to the perpetuation of his memory. However, today, thirty years after his death in 1968, his reputation as a designer ahead of his time, as a Critical Regionalist – critical of both contemporary mainstream architectural practice and of dominant social and cultural trends – is currently taking international dimensions. This belated reputation has resulted mostly from one project, his "Paths," which, as we will argue, is a clear manifestation of his stance for an "invisible," "dematerialized" architecture. Not only did Pikionis produce a most significant work but also a prototype for a design approach whose potentials have not yet been exhausted.

Born in 1887 in Piraeus, Pikionis entered the Greek Polytechnic School in Athens at the age of 16 in order to study civil engineering. The Engineering School was adjacent to the School of Fine Arts, and Pikionis established strong and lasting friendships with art students, one of whom was Giorgio de Chirico. In 1908, we find Pikionis in Munich and the year after in Paris, where he studies painting and architecture. In 1912, he returns to Greece, where he begins to teach, to write, and to carry on a modest practice. In addition, upon his return, Pikionis begins to study local vernacular buildings, focusing on their relation to the landscape. The impact of these studies is evident in his 1933 designs of two schools, one in the heart of Athens at the foot of Mount Lycabetos (Fig. 3), the other in Thessaloniki. Both schemes show careful consideration of fitting the project into its surroundings, a rare quality in modern architecture at that time.

During the same period, in parallel to his field studies and to his design activities, Pikionis began his research toward the development of a new theoretical framework that would relate buildings, landscape, and historical memory. It is precisely the uniqueness of this investigation that would ultimately catapult him from the status of a good local designer to that of a major contributor to the culture of this century. Many of the following factors contributed to his becoming interested in this problem: Pikionis was affiliated with many artists, quite a few of them landscape painters; he was operating within a physical environment loaded with historical associations; and finally, he was deeply aware of the absence of a comprehensive theory in modern architecture addressing structures and surrounding context as a whole at that time. Yet, the most important reason was probably Pikionis's distaste for worshiping buildings as autonomous objects; his interests lay clearly in an iconoclastic, "dematerialized" architecture.

Pikionis's struggle to develop a theory of architecture encompassing site and landscape is documented in the pages of *To Trito Mati*, a Greek journal he edited between 1935-1937.[1] In an article published in 1937, Pikionis presents a study carried out at Charlottenburg Technische Hochschule in Berlin by C. A. Doxiadis,[2] an ex-student of his who was to become a world-renowned planner after the Second World War. The

[1] *To Trito Mati*, 1935-37, Reprint. (Athens: Elliniko Logotexniko kai Istoriko Arxeio, 1980).

[2] Constantine Doxiadis's thesis, published in *To Trito Mati* in 1937 was published in English as *Architectural Space in Ancient Greece*, Jacqueline Tyrwitt, ed. (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1972). The major innovation of Doxiadis was in the use of empirical archaeological evidence combined with the introduction of a geometrical system that permitted the rationalization of space based on the egocentric space reference of the viewer, as opposed to the allocentric space frame of reference of the Beaux-Arts founded on a hierarchy of object-based accesses.

[3] Constantine Doxiadis, *Architectural Space in Ancient Greece*, Jacqueline Tyrwitt, ed. (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1972).

topic is the structure underlying the apparently chaotic architectural space of Ancient Greek architectural sites. Doxiadis's aim was to discover the hidden system that brought "order into the disposition of buildings in a lay out" and determined the "different shapes of space...and lines of buildings...in bringing buildings into harmony with each other and with the landscape."[3] Pikionis, elaborating on Doxiadis's thesis, offered a method for systematizing architectural space through the use of polar coordinates which represented visual lines departing from the viewer's eye. The coordinates thus constructed a tacit, "egocentric frame of reference" of space that permits the viewer to infer a pattern of relations between buildings and landscape (Fig. 2). The frame, therefore, does not single out any particular building; on the contrary, it brings all built volumes and all elements of the landscape together as one whole whose structure becomes understandable to the viewer through a process of abstraction and reflection. In this sense, the design object is not the *single* building, but rather the implied pattern of tacit *relations* between buildings and elements of the landscape, established by visual "occult" lines. As such, it is *understood* rather than *gazed at*.

In the context of the conflict between "spectacle" and "invisible" architecture, the system Pikionis offered to designers rested decidedly on the side of the "invisible," despite the fact that it was based on the model of vision. Furthermore, Pikionis offered a system that linked buildings, landscape, and the memory of the historical past. This later inclusion made the synthesis even more "invisible" because, in addition to

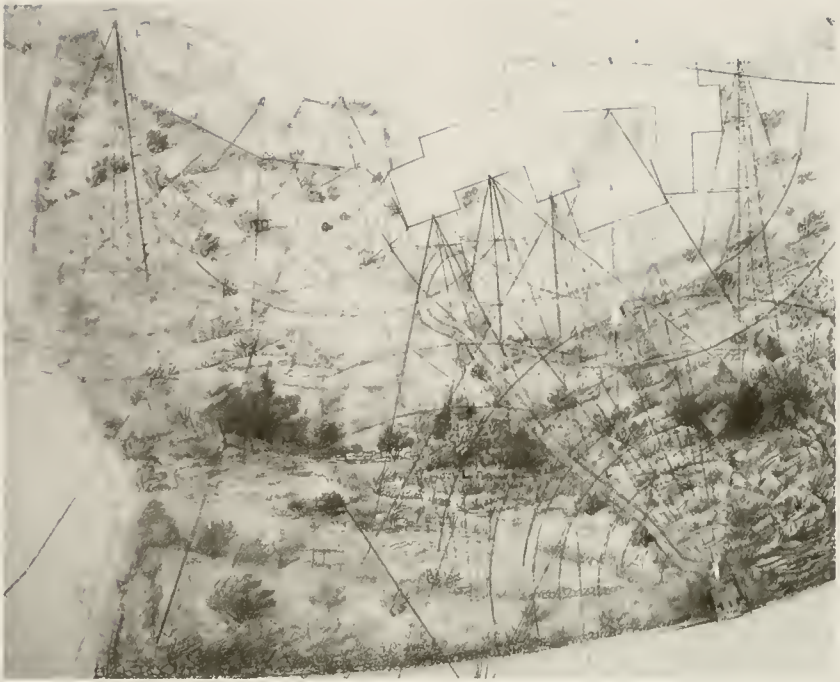


**Fig. 2** Hotel Xenia, Delfi (Dimitris Pikionis, 1951-56) Drawing showing ground plan of building with the architect's study of the visual relations between the hotel and landscape.

**Fig. 3** View of the Elementary School in Pefkakia, Lycabetus, Athens (Dimitris Pikionis, 1932).

the use of "occult" lines, it also involved relations between buildings, events, people, and stories concealed in the past of the site. One can trace back the origins of these ideas to the writings of Goethe and John Ruskin, as well as the work of Giorgio de Chirico.

In the same article, Pikionis refers to a text by Erich Mendelsohn, originally published in the *Berliner Tageblat* in 1931 and reprinted by him in a previous issue of *To Trito Mati*.[4] Mendelsohn wrote it after his visit to the Acropolis of Athens,[5] accompanied by Pikionis. He was deeply impressed by the tour, and especially by the ascension to the Parthenon.[6] In fact, this experience appears to have influenced Mendelsohn, who was even more interested in movement than Pikionis at that time, as in his design for a landscaped pathway up the hill in the case of the Weizmann Mansion of Rehoboth (1936-37).





One has the impression that Pikionis used Doxiadis's study as a vehicle to support his own polemical ideas about the importance of landscape in the design of building complexes but, most importantly, to develop his particular endeavors for an architecture of movement, of the "route." His major contribution occurred after the Second World War when he designed the "Paths," (Fig. 4a and 4b) in which his anti-idolatrous stance was clear in the "invisibility" of the forms he employed. Artur Glikson, describing the project in a letter to Lewis Mumford, referred to the "Paths" as "so well" designed "that hardly anyone realized that they were landscaped."[7] In this project, the early ideas of relating buildings with each other, with the surrounding landscape, and with the historical memory of the site were intertwined with the notion of movement, which already in the 1930s had begun to play a significant role in Pikionis's work. As it was previously presented in the pages of *To Trito Mati* by Pikionis and those of *Berliner Tageblat* by Erich Mendelsohn, movement along the route appeared as a sort of "*promenade solitaire*," offering solitary "cognitive pleasures" in experiencing dynamic relations between built forms, landscape, and memory. In this unique project, Pikionis achieved an architecture ensued from movement and human interaction; his design captured the social experience of community.

It is instrumental to regard Pikionis's work in the context of the historical moment of its production, the 1950s. For it is the time when the Welfare State architecture of post-war reconstruction, the commercial architecture of multi-national emporia and office chains, and the neo-monumental architecture equally ignored the value of social interaction. Contrary to these trends, Pikionis was a pioneer in offering both a theory and an actual demonstration of an approach based on social sensibilities. Seen in the particular context of postwar Greek history - the project being conceived and executed following the end of Greek Civil War – Pikionis's search for an architecture of community takes an even more urgent and tragic dimension. How Pikionis viewed his responsibility as an architect is evident from his letter to the Minister of Public Works of 1955.[8] There he wrote that he saw his "Paths" as combating the "banalities" of present day fashion and suggested the possibility of a different kind of architectural practice, one that would, above all, aim to serve the social aspects of architecture. This polemical, programmatic aspect

4 *To Trito Mati*, Ibid., p. 65.

5 The trip to Athens and the subsequent correspondence was kindly brought to our attention by Mendelsohn specialist Ita Heinze-Greenberg of the Technion in Haifa. See her "The Impossible takes Longer: Facts and Notes about the Weizmann Residence in Rehovoth," unpublished paper read at the conference on the Bauhaus organized in May 1994 by Michael Levine in Tel Aviv.

6 Erich Mendelsohn, "Mysterien-Strasse" and "Akropolis und Parthenon," *Berliner Tageblat* (May 1931). Translated in *Erich Mendelsohn: Letters of an Architect*, Oskar Beyer, ed., Geoffrey Strachan, transl., Nikolaus Pevsner, introd. (London: Abelard-Schuman, 1979), pp. 110-120.

7 Lewis Mumford, unpublished letter to Artur Glikson. Undated. By permission of Sophia Mumford and Andrew Glikson. See Alexander Tzonis and Rachel Kallus, eds. *Dialogues, a correspondence between Andrew Glikson and Lewis Mumford, 1950-1966*, forthcoming.

8 Dimitris Pikionis, Letter to Constantine Karamanlis, May 12, 1955, reprinted in *Dimitris Pikionis. The Landscaping of the Archaeological Site around Acropolis, 1954-57* (Athens: Bastas-Plessas Publications), pp. 31-33.

9 Shadrach Woods, "Free University, Berlin," *World Architecture 2*, (London: 1965), p. 113.

10 The new postwar architecture of community achieved through movement is the subject of Liane Lefaivre and Alexander Tzonis, "Beyond Monuments, Beyond Zip-a-ton," *Le Carre Bleu* (no. 3-4, 1999), pp. 4-44. Also published in *Shadrach Woods's Free University of Berlin* (London: A.A. Publications, 1999).

of the "Paths" explains why, despite the dominant presence of the surrounding ruins and their implied history, the project is free from nostalgia and full of human vitality.

In his efforts for a socially sensible approach to architecture, Pikionis was not alone. His idiom might have been made up of local stone and lime, of shrubs typical of the Attica region, but his message was the same as that of a younger postwar generation of architects. This was despite the fact that, in contrast to Pikionis, they were involved in building much larger and technologically more complex projects. We are referring to Louis Kahn's work during the 1950s and early 60s, to the young generation of architects of the 1950s such as Ernesto Rogers and James Stirling, and to the members of Team Ten, in particular Aldo van Eyck, Peter and Alison Smithson, Bakema, and Shadrach Woods. Much like Pikionis, they all turned their backs to aesthetic qualities of architecture to focus on movement and human interaction. To quote Shadrach Woods - one of the most lucid spokesmen of his generation - they proposed, much like Pikionis, that "the approach [to architecture could] no longer be only visual."[9] What Woods intended was "the creation of environment at every scale of human association" appropriate for a "society...entirely new... a completely open, non-hierarchical co-operative in which we all share on a basis of total participation and complete confidence." This was the web, or "stem," a kind of frame within which "function can be articulated," a mechanism of interaction to sustain human community.[10] In these terms, what Pikionis had designed was a stem intended to enhance the quality of the "environment of human association" as

**Fig. 4** The Paths to the Acropolis, Athens (Dimitris Pikionis, 1950-57): a. Plan b. View

dreamt by Woods and the other young architects of that time. We might say that Pikionis's non-visual design to sustain community was not only equally free from the idolatry of form but also highly inclusive since it embodied also landscape and memory. Characteristically, Pikionis told a colleague, who wrote to him in praise of the "Paths" for enriching the lives of "ordinary men and women," that he was happy he "read into the souls of simple people and appreciate[d] their unerring judgement instead of imprudently risking an aesthetic analysis, which more often than not proves uncertain, or worse, sterile."[11]

Indicative of Pikionis's appreciation by the younger generation of architects was the publication of an article by the Japanese critic Noriaki Kurokawa. In an issue of *Kenshiku Bunka*, Kurokawa lauded Pikionis's "Paths" as appealing to "crowds of people," declaring it a prototypical architecture of the future, "an architecture for human movement."[12] Kurokawa compared it to the new town prototype devised by Candilis, Josic and Woods and also to his own work. Lewis Mumford, who visited the project during his travel in Greece in the late 1950s, also admired Pikionis's "Paths." Mumford was so deeply moved by Pikionis's work that he decided to include it among the very few contemporary examples in his book, *The City in History*.[13]

What is remarkable about Pikionis's design is that it was built roughly as he had planned it. Equally extraordinary is the fact that today, decades after the completion of the project, in the midst of pollution and tourists' crowds, one can still experience the dialogue between artifact and landscape, the sense of community the scheme generates, and its powerful presence despite its "invisibility." Few of the projects by the young architects of the 1950s and 60s who shared the same enthusiasm and beliefs with Pikionis had the same luck.

With the exception of the "Paths," Pikionis's theory hardly had any major application. Nor has any major alternative system, trying to answer the same questions Pikionis addressed, been developed since. It was only in the beginning of the 1990s that Daniel Libeskind advanced a similar approach in his Extension of the Berlin Museum with the Department of Jewish Museum (1989-1997). Like Pikionis, Libeskind linked persons and objects from the surrounding landscape to shape, in his case, a "Path-building." The Libeskind system, however, is derived from much deeper reflections than the Pikionis-Doxiadis one. His is not a path for people to interact as they move. Neither is it a "promenade solitaire." Rather, it is a confrontation with the objects of memory of the tragic historical events of the Holocaust, with the history of anti-Semitism, and with the long tradition of opposition to idolatry.

To return to our initial point, two major antagonistic attitudes toward objects have divided architects, critics, and the public of architecture over the centuries; worshiping buildings as objects of desire and goals in themselves as opposed using buildings as instruments to achieve higher values. Pikionis belongs to the second category. He renounced the architecture of the spectacle. He embraced an "invisible" architecture of movement, encounter, and dialogue between objects and land-

11 Dimitris Pikionis, 1964 "letter to a German colleague on the Acropolis-Philopappos project" referred in *Dimitris Pikionis* (Athens: Bastas-Plessas Publications, 1994), p. 96.

12 Noriaki Kurokawa, "Architecture of the Road," *Kenshiku Bunka* (Jan. 1963).

13 Lewis Mumford, *The City in History* (Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1961), Graphic Section One, Plates 10-12. Pikionis is one of the very few contemporary architects mentioned in that book, along with Bakema and van der Broek.

14 *I and Thou: A New Translation* by Walter Kaufmann, 1970.

15 Ibid.

scape, and, above all, between humans. To summarize his approach, one might quote the philosopher Martin Buber; he rejected "a relationship to an idol" and instead he decided "to confront a 'You;'" he opted for "the 'You' rather than an object."[14]

This "invisibility" of buildings, of course, is only metaphorical. Buildings are unavoidably visible, inescapably material objects. To quote Buber once more: "Every 'You' in the world is doomed by its very nature to become a thing."[15] The problem posed not only to architects but also to all human beings is how to transform this It into a You, how to give physical form to a genuine dialectic relationship, how to turn the "chrysalis" into the "butterfly." In his work, Pikionis offered an approach both critical and creative; he suggested a different kind of postwar architectural practice, one relinquishing the idolatry of the visual object in order to weave the invisible ties between architecture and human community.

*This article draws from two books in progress: Liane Lefaivre and Alexander Tzonis, *Modern Anti-Modern; Architecture since 1945* (Penguin Books, 2000), and Alexander Tzonis, *Architecture, I and You.* Part of this material appeared also in Liane Lefaivre and Alexander Tzonis "Les sentiers de Dimitris Pikionis, une voie du regionalisme des annees 50," *Architecture Movement Continuité* (1999).

**Fig. 5** The Paths to the Acropolis, Athens (Dimitris Pikionis, 1950-57): Detail

# Critical Domesticity in the 1960s

Liane Lefaivre





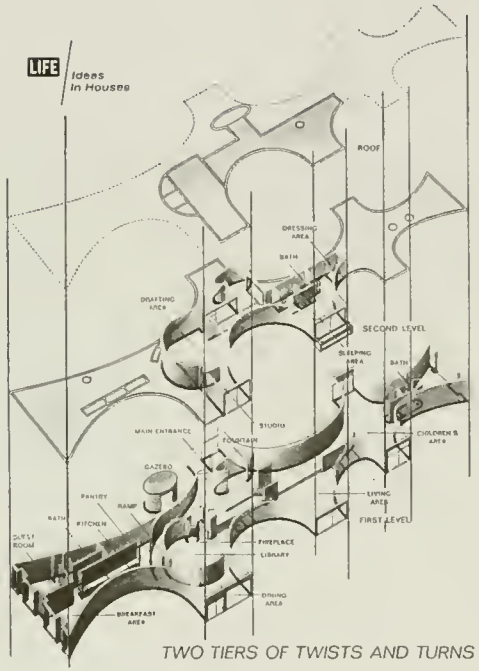



**Fig. 1** The Lincoln House featured in *Life* magazine, January 1965

The Lincoln House is one of the most critical expressions of architecture of the 1960s. Designed by MIT graduates Mary Otis Stevens and Thomas F. McNulty[1] (1964-65), this major building was a national sensation when it was featured in *Life* magazine in January 1965. It is one of the most creative reinterpretations of domesticity from the point of view of gender and sexual politics of the time. Limitations of space and time do not permit an exhaustive coverage of the multiple critical aspects of the house; in this short passage I will not delve into the consciously female elements it embodies, nor into its ingenious structural solutions. The focus here is, rather, on its conception as a passageway, a channel for flow and movement. The Lincoln House is the first to abandon all remnants of what Otis Stevens refers to as the domestic "box." Its structure is wholly defined as a *passageway*.

Less "visible" but equally unique among the features of the house is the purpose to which movement is put. The architects planned their house as a continuum of meeting places and, ultimately, as a means of nurturing the family as a community. From this point of view, the house is part of what we have elsewhere called the postwar "humanist rebellion" initiated by the members of Team Ten, such as Aldo van Eyck, the Smithsons, Shadrach Woods, Giancarlo De Carlo, and other postwar architects such as Louis Kahn and Dimitris Pikionis.[2] Otis Stevens and McNulty were among the generation of American architects who were influenced by these ideas. What closely ties the Lincoln House to the humanist rebellion is its use of movement-driven, path-based design as a means of enhancing community.

The house was sold some years ago, and was demolished by a new owner last August. The following excerpts are from an interview with Otis Stevens carried out in October 30, 1999.

[1] Mary Otis Stevens and Thomas F. McNulty were co-authors of the book *The World of Variation* (New York: G. Braziller, i Press series on the human environment, 1970); Mary Otis Stevens was director of i Press series (1968-1974).

[2] See Liane Lefaivre and Alex Tzonis, Aldo van Eyck, *Humanist Rebel; Inbetweening in a Postwar World* (Rotterdam, 010 Publishers, 1999) and "Beyond Zip-a-tone... An Architecture of Humanism," in *Shadrach Woods's Free University of Berlin* (London, AA Publications, 1999); also Alex Tzonis's article on Dimitris Pikionis in the present issue.

You conceived your house around the idea of movement. Why?

What we were interested in was not just movement per se. We wanted to make a house as a kind of miniature city: it was very urban. The idea was to bring people together, not isolate them in boxes on different floors. You had choices all the time. The circulation pattern of the house was multi-layered, as you can see in the section. It was on two levels, so that people could pass each other like trains in the night, as the children often did in order to avoid us as we talked with our friends. You went down two tiers of twists and turns, like any hill town where you move with the shape of the land. The house was built into the site in Lincoln which did have a slope that went down toward the pond, so we brought that slope into the house. The whole issue was circulation and movement, with the idea that no one was ever stuck in one place. If you weren't happy with the social scene, you could leave. In fact, the house didn't just have one or two entrances, it had seven. It didn't have any doors on the inside, either, because there were no rooms really. Everything was one big space. By the same token, you were never isolated; you could always join in, directly or indirectly, as an actor or a spectator.

What did other architects think about the house?

When Buckminster Fuller came to the house, he looked around and said it was the inverse of his own Dymaxion house. That's what it seemed like to him. His ground plan was circular, and you could take in the whole space in one look. Not so in the Lincoln House. You needed to keep moving in order to be able to take it all in, and then only in an incremental way. And the curves, compared to the Dymaxion house, were all concave from the inside, so they kept pushing you in a dynamic way through the space, rather than confining you to one static vantage point.

**Fig. 2** Mary Otis Stevens and Thomas F. McNulty, House in Lincoln, Massachusetts (1964-65); aerial view



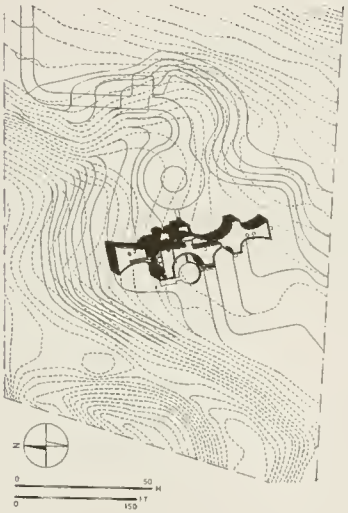


**Fig. 3** Site Plan

Did you have a clear position on family values in mind when you designed this house?

I was against ordinary American domesticity. I didn't want my children to grow up in the conventional kind of restrictive environment in which I had been brought up. This was the sixties. I wanted my three sons to be part of the flow of life. Before the industrial revolution, children and adults had shared a common life, and I wanted my children to be able to leave the child world and enter the adult life when they wanted. There was no such thing as the children's quarters and adults' quarters in the house. Everything was the same. There was democracy. There was complete equality.

# an interview with Mary Otis Stevens





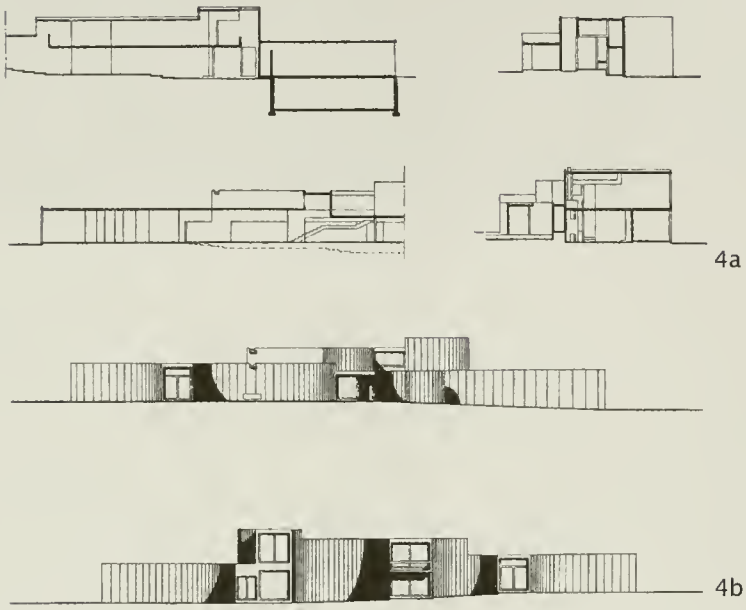
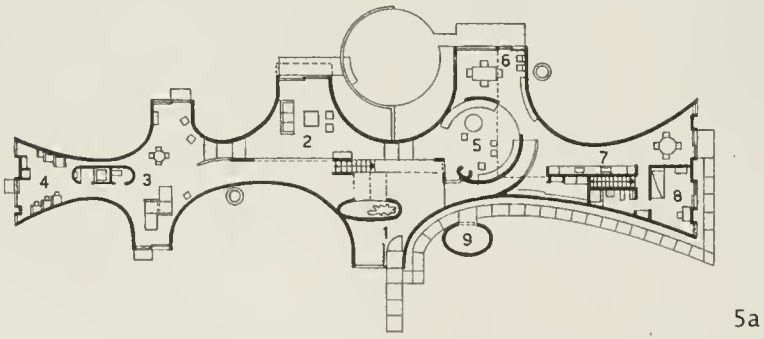
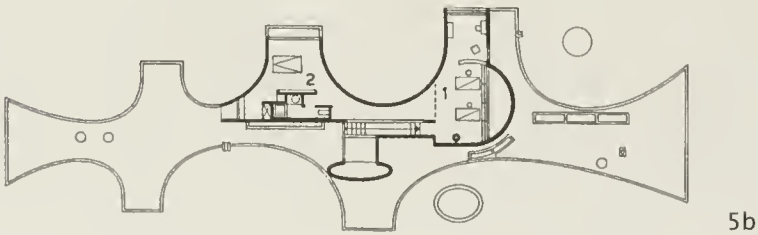



**Fig. 4** a. Sections b. Elevations




We were always there for one another. There was a sense of community. In American families, the value of individualism is so highly valued that it can pose a problem. It's individual versus the community. I think it's a bad thing to have an adversarial, confrontational relationship between the two. Actually, the individual and the community should be nourishing each other and be held in balance.

Your house doesn't look like any other house. Were there specific projects you were reacting against?

Yes. The Architects' Collaborative (TAC) was designing Moon Hill. They were little cubicles. To us, of course, it mattered what the building looked like, but basically we were interested in how it allowed growth and change and variation. We designed the building from the inside out. It

**Fig. 5** a. Ground floor plan

1 coats - 2 living room - 3 children's play and sleeping area - 4 children's study - 5 library - 6 dining room - 7 kitchen - 8 guest room - 9 tools

b. First floor plan

1. architects' studio - 2 parents' sleeping area

# *The Lincoln House*

wasn't like anything else: it was the result of a process, not the application of preset notions.

The house also contained your and Tom's design studio and office, like the Eameses. What was the idea?

The 60s were all about looking at other alternatives, connections between functions. You didn't have to do things in isolation any more, you could make connections between them. As a mother, having the office in the house was a practical solution. I thought life shouldn't become compartmentalized. I wanted an environment where many variations could take place. This precluded a static version of life, one based on exclusion rather than inclusion.



The Lincoln House enjoyed such media visibility in the early 60s. Why do you think it subsequently disappeared into obscurity?

The climate changed, postmodernism took over, and our day was over. People retrenched from the 60s, I mean, from the spirit of experimentation and the what-ifs. Maybe it was the Cold War that made people retrench and want to go back to the past. The past always looks good from a nostalgic point of view. That wasn't the one we had taken in our house. There was always something to look both backward and forward to. You never got finished living in this house because things were always changing.

On November 3, 1998, Alfredo Jaar addressed his Rwanda Project (1994-1998) as part of the MIT Department of Architecture Lecture Series. As Jaar explained, "What brought [him] to Rwanda was the way the press was reacting to the tragedy. You would find a little dispatch saying, 'Thirty thousand bodies are washing down the Kagera River.' And that was buried on page seven of the newspaper." Quite significantly, the title of his presentation was "The Sound of Silence," implying both the world's resonating silence while the genocide was happening and his own experimentation with the inclusion of music into his projects. In fact, by using text, sound, and smell in his works, the artist, who went to Rwanda as a photographer, reacted to the media's saturating use of graphic imagery when portraying tragic events.

His encounters were also so unique and shattering that, after returning, the photographs seemed inadequate for relaying them. Jaar has thus far disclosed only six of the 3,000 that he took in Rwanda. He said, "The experience was so radical that I had to start searching for new ways to deal with images and with other things. I had never used music in such a way. I had never used smell. If you had told me five years ago that I was going to do an installation with smell, I would have laughed at you. At that time, I would have thought that this would be the most ridiculous thing I would ever do. Me working with smell. And I came up with this. And the incorporation of music, the importance and meaning that music is now gaining in my work. I'm searching. In a way, these are all essays in representation."

# The Rwanda Project

Alfredo Jaar

Edited by Jennifer Mack and Garyfallia Katsavounidou

## *Untitled Performance (Newsweek, 1994)*

**April 6, 1994**

A plane carrying the presidents of Rwanda and Burundi is shot down above Kigali, the capital of Rwanda. Their deaths spark widespread massacres targeting Hutu moderates and the minority Tutsi population in Kigali and throughout Rwanda. The Rwandan Patriotic Front, which had been encamped along the northern border of Rwanda, starts a new offensive.

**April 12, 1994**

The interim Rwandan government flees Kigali for the town of Gitarama. Relief officials estimate that as many as 25,000 people have been killed in Kigali alone during the first five days of violence.

**April 24, 1994**

The United Nations Security Council Resolution 912 reduces the United Nations peacekeeping force in Rwanda from 2,500 to 270. 50,000 deaths.



**April 30, 1994**

At least 1.3 million Rwandans have fled their homes. More than 250,000 refugees crossed the border into Tanzania. The largest mass exodus ever witnessed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. 100,000 deaths.

**May 8, 1994**

The Rwandan Patriotic Front gains control of most of northern Rwanda. As killings continue, hundreds of thousands of refugees flee to Zaire, Burundi, and Uganda. 200,000 deaths.

**May 13, 1994**

More than 30,000 bodies wash down the Kagera River, which marks Rwanda's border with Tanzania.

**May 17, 1994**

The United Nations Security Council passes Resolution 918, authorizing the deployment of 5,500 United Nations troops to Rwanda. The Resolution says, "Acts of genocide may have been committed."

**May 22, 1994**

The Rwandan Patriotic Front gains full control of Kigali and the airport. 300,000 deaths

**May 26, 1994**

Deployment of the mainly African United Nations force is delayed due to a dispute over who will provide equipment and cover the costs for the operation. 400,000 deaths.

**June 5, 1994**

The United States argues with the United Nations over the cost of providing heavy armored vehicles for the peacekeeping force. 500,000 deaths.

**June 10, 1994**

The killing of Tutsis and moderate Hutus continues, even in refugee camps. 600,000 deaths.

**June 22, 1994**

France announces its plan to deploy 2,500 troops to Rwanda as an interim peacekeeping force until the United Nations troops arrive. 700,000 deaths.

**June 17, 1994**

With still no sign of United Nations deployment, the United Nations Security Council authorizes the deployment of 2,500 French troops in southwest Rwanda. 800,000 deaths.

**June 28, 1994**

The United Nations Rights Commission's Special Envoy releases a report, stating that the massacres were pre-planned and formed part of a systematic campaign of genocide.

**July 4, 1994**

French troops establish a so-called "safe zone" in the southwest of Rwanda.

**July 8, 1994**

As the Rwandan Patriotic Force advances westward, the influx of displaced persons into the so-called "safe zone" increases from 500,000 to 1,000,000 within a few days. 900,000 deaths.

**July 12, 1994**

An estimated 1.5 million Rwandans flee toward Zaire. More than 15,000 refugees cross the border every hour and enter the town of Goma, which becomes the largest refugee camp in the world. A cholera epidemic sweeps through the camps in and around Goma, killing an estimated 50,000 people

**July 21, 1994**

The United Nations Security Council reaches a final agreement to send an international force to Rwanda. 1,000,000 people have been killed. 2,000,000 have fled the country. Another 2,000,000 are displaced within Rwanda.

**August 1, 1994**

Newsweek magazine dedicates its first cover to Rwanda.

## *Real Pictures*

This is one of the earliest works from the Rwanda Project. These are photographs inside black, archival boxes. Each box contains a photograph, but you cannot open the boxes. You can only see the description that has been silk-screened onto the top of the box, describing the photograph inside. One of these texts reads:

Natarama Church, Niamata, Rwanda, 40 kilometers south of Kigali, Monday, August 29, 1994. Taken five seconds later, this photograph shows the rich, blue sky, a bit of the tree line, and one perfect, white cloud hovering above the church. The stench of death still lingers.

My attempt here is to work around the problem that we are bombarded by thousands of images that have become meaningless to us. We don't see them anymore. So, the logic of this piece was a kind of reverse strategy. I say, "What if I don't show images? Maybe now we will see them better." By not showing any images of blood, of massacre, of pain, of loss, and just going back to the basics, to the text, to the words that would tell one story at a time, my hope was that the words would be able to communicate. And maybe the desire to see would trigger a vision, a new understanding. This work really asks the audience for a leap of faith, to believe me that there are images here. Every box has an image. The installation was a space of darkness, of silence, of empty spaces.

The project consists of ten smaller light boxes on the left side and one slightly larger light box on the back wall. These light boxes contain only words, words of light. Visitors walk in front of them, their faces illuminated by this light, and they are themselves reflected onto the black background of the boxes. Just words, words like

Kigali
Shangi
Gikongoro
Cyangugu
Mibirizi
Butare
Amahoro
Kibungo
Rukara

## *Let there be light*



Names of places where between 5,000 and 100,000 people were killed. These words are meaningless to most people. They don't have the connotation of a Guernica, of an Auschwitz. The question is *why*. After we finish walking along these ten names, we encounter this box, which is called a quad-vision box and has a mechanism that allows me to change the image four times, once every 15 seconds. This sequence is the first image I released from Rwanda after two years and 3,000 pictures brought back. In this sequence, we see some children expressing pain, love, and solidarity. All the things that the international community did not express and a fact that became evident to us as we walked in front of these names that are totally meaningless. But also, they're looking at something that happens outside of the frame that we don't see. The media normally shows us what's outside, what's over there, near the exit sign. I decided to concentrate on a small, simple moment of humanity at the scene of this tragedy. Trying to suggest, maybe, let's not look at fifty or one hundred images of blood. Let's concentrate on one scene. Maybe this scene will tell us something.

## *The eyes of Gutete Emerita*

This project consists of two quad-visions synchronized with text.

Gutete Emerita, 30 years old, is standing in front of a church where 400 Tutsi men, women, and children were systematically slaughtered by a Hutu death squad during Sunday mass. She was attending mass with her family when the massacre began. Killed with machetes in front of her eyes were her husband, Tito Kahinamura, 40, and her two sons, Muhoza, 10, and Matirigari, 7. Somehow, Gutete managed to escape with her daughter, Marie Louise Unumararunga, 12. They hid in a swamp for three weeks, coming out only at night for food.

This text will last for 45 seconds. Very few people will stay there. They will just go. They don't have time. Those who stay will see this:

Her eyes look lost and incredulous. Her face is the face of someone who has witnessed an unbelievable tragedy and now wears it. She has returned to this place in the woods because she has nowhere else to go. When she speaks about her lost family, she gestures to corpses on the ground, rotting in the African sun.

This lasts for 30 seconds. Those who are still in front of this work will see the next step:

I remember her eyes; the eyes of Gutete Emerita.

This lasts 15 seconds. Up to now, we have had 45, 30, and 15 seconds. One

minute and a half of only text, and then this: we see Gutete's eyes for just a fraction of a second, and then we go back to the text.
My struggle here is to find a balance, a balance between information and visuals, between information and spectacle, between content and visuals. I'm trying to suggest that this is what we have to know before we see this. This is what we have to know for this image to make sense. If we don't know this, then this image doesn't make sense, and we can dismiss it. Maybe by knowing

this, this will make sense. So, I'm trying to find this balance, this impossible balance.
This is a larger installation. After you walk along a hallway, you enter a dark room that has been divided into two spaces. The first wall that divides the room has an illuminated text that measures 17 feet long with letters just half an inch high. You walk alongside this text before entering the second space. The text is in Spanish. It says the following:

## *The silence of Nduwayezu*



Over a five month period in 1994, more than one million Rwandans, mostly members of the Tutsi minority, were systematically slaughtered while the international community closed its eyes to genocide. The killings were largely carried out by Hutu militias who had been armed and trained by the Rwandan military. As a consequence of this genocide, millions of Hutus and Tutsis fled to Zaire, Burundi, Tanzania, and Uganda. Many still remain in refugee camps, fearing renewed violence upon their return home. Like adults, children were systematically targeted and killed. The militias wanted to make sure they did not repeat their mistake of 1959, when they had not killed the children. Those children went into exile and formed a resistance. It is impossible to estimate the number of children killed during the massacres. Some children were slaughtered with their parents. Others witnessed their parents and brothers and sisters being murdered. Many who survived the killings lost their will to live and died. On Thursday morning, August 25, 1994, I entered the Rubavu refugee camp near Gisende in Rwanda as school was about to begin. As I approached the makeshift school, children gathered around me. I smiled at them, and some smiled back. Three children, Nduwayezu, Dusabe, and Utamoni, were seated on the steps of the school door. Nduwayezu, 5, the oldest of the three, was the only one who looked directly at my camera. Like the other 36 children in the camp, he lost both parents. When Nduwayezu arrived at Rubavu, he remained silent for four weeks. Four weeks of silence.

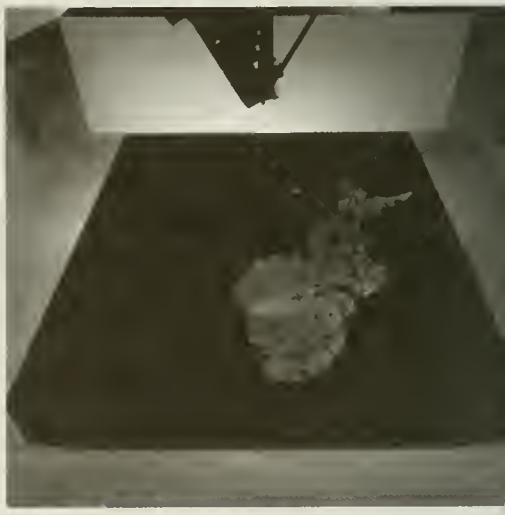
And the last line of the text says,

I remember his eyes, and I will never forget his silence.
The silence of Nduwayezu.

As we finish reading this wall, we move into the next room, where we are confronted with a very large light table, approximately 17' by 17' square, on top of which there are one million slides. One million slides in reference to the one million deaths. As we approach the table, we realize that there are loupes, magnifiers, all around, so we can actually pick up the slides and look at them. This is the moment I wait for, when someone has his eyes or her eyes half an inch away from the image. It is the eyes of Nduwayezu, repeated one million times. The idea here is again to give a certain amount of information before we release one image and to create a mise-en-scène for the image to make sense. The million slides make reference to the mil-

## *Emergency*

This is a current installation I have in a convent in Barcelona. It is an old convent with arches all around and the central space has a very high ceiling, like 20 meters. As one is moving toward the center of the space, there is a metal pool, nine by nine meters, approximately 30 feet by 30 feet wide. The pool is filled with water, and this water reflects the space. Metaphorically, it reflects the museum and Spanish society. Every twelve minutes, this emerges from the inside of the pool. It's the continent of Africa, made out of fiberglass but to scale. When it reaches full visibility, it stays there for just one second and disappears again. So, for twelve minutes, you don't see anything. Those running from work to work don't even realize how this piece works. They just see the reflection. By chance, some will see it happening, and those who know will stay there and wait for it to happen. In this piece, I wanted to comment on the failed potential of Spain to become the door from Africa to Europe and from Europe to Africa. It hasn't been like that because it is a racist society, just like American society is racist. In Spain, information about Africa is like that in America, like that in most parts of the world; we hear about the tragedy for a couple of minutes, and then it disappears again until the next tragedy. I wanted to represent that with this piece, and at the same time to signal the existence of this continent, right there, at their feet. Almost as if to say, "Ok, let's start from scratch. There is a continent there. It's more than tragedies. This is the map. This is its actual shape."

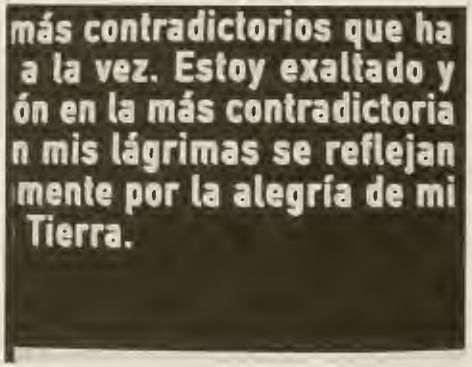


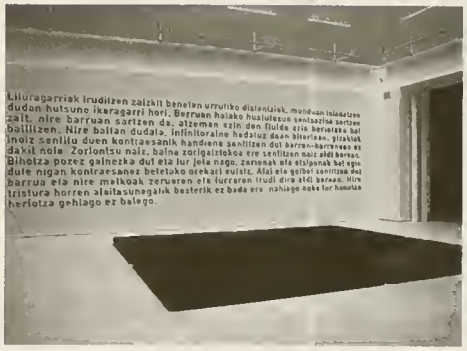
## *Meditation Spaces*

This was an installation in San Sebastián in the Basque Country. I had two courtyards to work with, and I could not control the light in them. There was natural light coming from above, and the two floors above the space housed the public library of the city of San Sebastián. In these courtyards, I created two "Meditation Spaces." This is the first one. I simply enclosed one side with a panel with a Cioran text in Spanish, which reflected my feelings at the time I was working in Rwanda very well. In the middle, I offered four cushions for people to lie down, sit, and meditate about the meaning of life and death. In the corners of the space, I placed these little devices, through which we had the smell of tea, of Rwandan tea, coming out. Tea is the major crop of Rwanda's agriculture.

For this project, we brought tea from Rwanda, and we gave it to a specialist who does perfumes, and he worked with the essence of the Rwandan tea. I wanted to offer the audience the smell that I wanted to smell when I was in Rwanda, that of the tea. For when I came back from Rwanda, I smelled death for more than three months. I would take three or four showers a day, and I could not get rid of the smell of death. I would tell this to my psychiatrist, and he would say, "You don't smell death. Death is here. It's not on your body."

In the other courtyard, we did another "Meditation Space." This time, the text is in Basque, which is the local language. Two spaces, two languages: Basque and Spanish. And I used the reverse colors. This one is called, "Meditation Space: Coffee," and it emits the smell of coffee from Rwanda.



## *Last Words*

Ultimately, these works fail. They fail because they are condemned to fail. They fail because we cannot make sense of what we must let remain senseless. That is why I have looked and searched for refuge in music. Music is the simplest and most powerful tool for healing. Today, Africa produces some of the most extraordinary contemporary music ever created. Countries like Mali, Nigeria, Congo, Senegal, even a small island called Cape Verde, have produced remarkable musicians, even when these countries are facing the most extraordinarily difficult conditions. Music produces space. This music produces sublime space that stills the mind and fills the heart. I'm a visual artist, but I have become a musical refugee.





This presentation will end with the most beautiful voice of Africa. His name is Bonga and he is from Angola, a former Portuguese colony. Bonga was brought up in a family of nine children. He started as a professional athlete, a runner, but he was also an activist, and every time he would travel outside of Angola for international competitions, he would carry information with him to give to resistance groups working against the Portuguese. When he was caught and forced into exile, he found refuge in the Netherlands. He created his first record there, called "Angola '72." The record was so revolutionary that it was banned immediately in Angola. People who were caught smuggling it into Angola were put in jail. After a while, "Angola '72" became the rallying cry of the independence movement. Because of this record, the Netherlands and Portugal reached an agreement to extradite Bonga, so he had to go underground, to Germany, to Belgium and elsewhere in Europe until 1975, when Angola finally found independence.

I've selected Bonga to finish because he has an incredible voice. Critics just can't find the right way to define this voice. The best definition I've read about Bonga's voice is that, "If ashes could sing, it would be Bonga's voice." So, I'll dedicate this song to the ashes of Rwanda.

# A Case of Visual Agnosia

Zissis Kotionis

**Fig. 1** René Magritte, *The Treachery of Images.*



"What is this?" I asked, holding up a glove.
"May I examine it?" he asked, and, taking it from me, he proceeded to examine it as if he examined geometrical shapes.
"A continuous surface," he announced at last, "enfolding on itself. It appears to have five outpouchings, if that is the word."
"Yes," I said cautiously. "You have given me a description. Now tell me what it is."
"A container of some sort?"
"Yes," I said, "and what would it contain?"
"It would contain its contents!" said Dr. P., with a laugh.[1]

[1] Oliver Sacks, *The Man who Mistook His Wife for a Hat* (London: Picador, 1986), p. 13.

Dr. P is a patient suffering from a neurological condition termed Visual Agnosia by Oliver Sacks in his book, *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*. What is interesting in the case of Dr. P., an active and widely known musician, is that his visual agnosia is described as an inability to recognize - and therefore to identify and name - specific objects of the visual world, while he is able to recognize geometric shapes and refer to what is seen, as in the case of the glove, in terms of abstract spatial or conceptual categories. What could we expect from the same patient, suffering from visual agnosia, if, instead of the glove, Dr. Sacks had requested a description of the modern house across the street? Not being able to recognize and name the house, we could expect the patient to refer to abstract concepts and geometric shapes and answer, "I see a white volume formed by flat rectangle surfaces." This description of the house, which selectively propounds certain geometrical characteristics of the house-object, would seem familiar and self-evident, yet it is determined by a specific historical perspective. It would be much easier to describe a modern structure designed by Mies van der Rohe or Rietveld based on its geometric characteristics than a farmhouse in the Black Forest or the continuous housing facades along the Amsterdam canals. For the description of a farmhouse, the use of elements such as roof, door, windows, and the use of terms for materials such as slates or shingles would be much more appropriate. On the contrary, a house by Rietveld could more easily be described by means of abstract concepts such as rectangle surfaces, voids, solids, basic colors, etc.

Perhaps we should not subject Dr. Sacks's patient to any further hypothetical and arbitrary tests, since it is apparent that, based on his mental

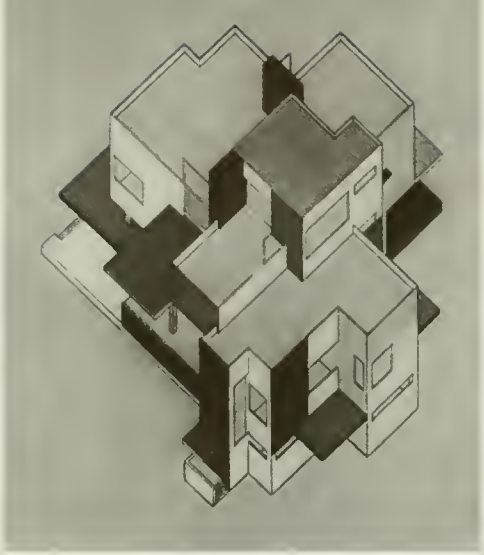


**Fig. 2** Cornelis van Eesteren / Theo van Doesburg, Axonometric drawing, *Maison Particulière*, 1923.





faculties and condition of visual agnosia, it would be much easier for him to recognize Rietveld's dwelling than Heidegger's Black Forest cabin. According to the doctor, it is clear that "abstract shapes clearly present no (identification) problems."[2]

[2] Ibid., p. 11.

As will be clarified further on, the narrative construct through which Dr. Sacks describes and highlights this incident is rooted in a deeper understanding of the history of modern art. Thus, in the course of his narration, he introduces the aesthetic dimension into the symptomatology of a disorder. Inversely, we the audience, based on the example provided by the musician's visual agnosia, attempt to introduce the pathological dimension into the re-reading of the history of modern forms.

In reference to the transition to modern architecture at the start of the century, Sigfried Giedion notes that "to become a constituent element of a volume, the wall had first to be cleansed of all decorative eruptions of the 19th century. There had to be a rediscovery of the aesthetic values of the pure surface plane whose expressive power had been lost since Egyptian times. In terms of space conception, this rediscovery tore the massive traditional house apart. It was in the early 1920s that van Doesburg, van Eesteren, Rietveld, and Mies van der Rohe achieved this transformation. The house became dissected into flat rectangular planes"[3] (Fig. 2). Keeping Dr. P.'s case in mind, we could describe the transition from the "traditional massive house" to the Modernist "dissected" house as a transition from the mental ability to recognize and name the world of appearances to Dr. P's visual agnosia, in which the visual perception of reality, as if a kind of platonic ailment, is reduced to simple geometric shapes. This observation suffices to provide an initial opportunity to elaborate on Giedion's short story about the wall.

[3] Sigfried Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture* (Cambridge , MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), p. li.

Following the post-Albertian tradition of the decorated wall, the 19th century wall is easily identified visually, due to the narrative character of its decorative elements (e.g. framed windows, pseudo-rustication, etc.). Conversely, following the elimination of decoration, the denudation of the wall, and its reduction to the geometric characteristics of a "rectangle surface plane," the wall loses its recognizable elements and

attains the condition of "visual agnosia" of a denuded metaphysical dimension.

In a similar vein, consider the protagonist of a 1911 Viennese cartoon.[4] With the Looshaus at Michaelerplatz in mind, a passerby, suddenly standing in front of an open sewer, draws a "funny" analogy between its shape and that of Loos's building (Fig. 3). This analogy reveals the period's anti-Modernist morals. It is of further interest to note that the cartoonist, while faithfully transcribing the building's windows on the sewer cover, is not exact in his representation of the building itself; he has eliminated the Doric columns flanking the entrance, the facade's main decorative feature. This removal of the building's decorative elements forces the rhetoric of the denuded wall to a more radical form of non-identification that allows its transcription from one checkered, grid-like surface to another grid-like surface, while the cartoon's contextual meaning transforms it into a completely different object. "The most modern man," according to the cartoon's caption, confronted by the sewer, recognizes at last "that for which he has searched so long." The underlying assumption presupposes the unidentifiable nature of the Modernist form.

Since the time Loos's centrally located building shocked the Viennese aristocracy, many things have changed, and the city's modern buildings have become familiar landmarks of this historic capital. However, the fundamental material essence of the forms, transformed by Modernism into geometric shapes or abstract patterns, has not changed. Therefore, if this insistence on the correlation of the term "visual agnosia" with Modernism's geometric forms is to be of any interest, it must not be limited to the description of the shock its novel appearance caused in its time but, conversely, extended to the generalization of the concept of unidentifiability beyond Modernist forms. What would really happen if the aesthetic relationship between a contemporary modern wall and an ancient Egyptian wall - as eloquently exemplified by Giedion - led us to the conclusion that these two distant civilizations both showed the same neurological symptoms of visual agnosia?

The actual criticism of Modernism is an inseparable part of Modernism itself. When, for example, we speak of the relationship between the specific and the abstract, the descriptive and the geometric, the evident and the implied, we formalize the debate arising from the phenomenological criticism of Modernism in the 1970s and 1980s. During that time, Alberto Pérez Gómez reintroduced the juxtaposition between the lebenswelt and the abstract world of geometry, while Christian Norberg-Schulz followed suit and, borrowing from Heidegger, compared the concept of the thing to the crisis of meaning of the modern object. Since its criticism is part of Modernism, we could hypothesize that the pathology of criticism is also part of modern pathology. However, in this context, we must avoid the tendency to link the visual agnosia argument with a hypothetical phenomenological criticism on Modernism. A neuro-pathological equivalent of the "phenomenological" extolling of the representational form could easily be found.

[4] Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1985), p. 91.



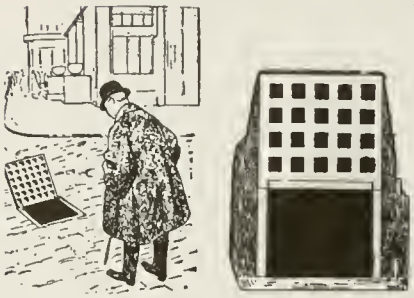


**Fig. 3** The template of the cartoon in Kenneth Frampton's *Modern Architecture* reads, "A 1911 cartoonist's comment on Loos's Goldman and Salatsch facade (1910-11)." The original caption read, "Brooding about art, the most modern man walks through the streets. Suddenly he stops transfixed. He has found that for which he has searched so long."

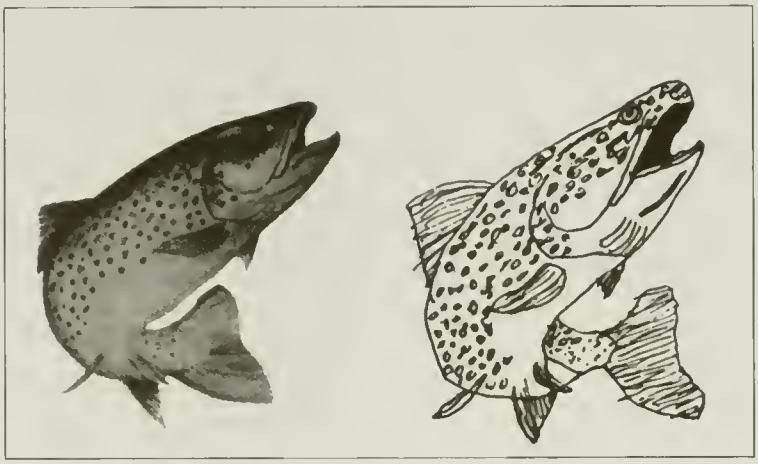


**Fig. 4** Young Jose's drawing of a fish from a *National Geographic* picture.

Sacks's book, which starts with Dr. P.'s case of visual agnosia, ends with the following story: little Jose, an autistic child with drastically reduced cognitive and emotional interaction with the surrounding world, develops a particular ability to reproduce specific images from a National Geographic style magazine provided by the doctor (Fig. 4). In this case, the doctor diagnoses - together with a remarkable ability to reproduce specific forms such as a fish or a canoe - the complete inability to comprehend the world in which these forms exist, as well as the incapability to grasp abstract concepts. For little Jose, a large part of reality beyond the specificity of the given image falls under the category of the essentially invisible. Should we then ironically consider this autistic entrenchment in the specific, this consoling glimmer from inside the isolated autistic "island world"[5] as the opposing pole to the visual agnosia of the professor, who can interact with the visible world only by referring to abstract concepts or by relating it to his pure "inner music"[6]? Should we, even in jest, add to the criticism on Modernism as "visual agnosia" a further criticism on its adherence to the representational? Furthermore, having taken this construct into the realm of the ridiculous, could we then return to a time of ideological peace and reexamine the relationship between art and pathology, aesthetics and neurology, only this time from an anthropological perspective?

[5] Oliver Sacks, p. 221.

[6] Ibid., p. 17.

Obviously not wholly rid of the romantic notion that identifies the artistic with the pathological, Dr. Sacks tells us that "there is often a struggle and sometimes a collusion between the powers of pathology and creation."[7] By taking Dr. P.'s case from the realm of neuropathology and transferring his disorder, visual agnosia, into the realm of aesthetics, we commit an arbitrary act, even though we nod expectantly from the side of aesthetics toward the side of neurology. We are not alone, however, in this arbitrary gathering. Dr. Sacks nods from the opposite side toward aesthetics. Having arrived at the patient's house, his wife shows Sacks the musician's paintings, dating from his youth to the recent past. As he examines them in chronological order, he notes, "All his earlier work was naturalistic and realistic, with vivid mood and atmosphere, but finely detailed and concrete. Then, years later, they became less vivid, less concrete, less realistic and naturalistic but far more abstract,

[7] Ibid.

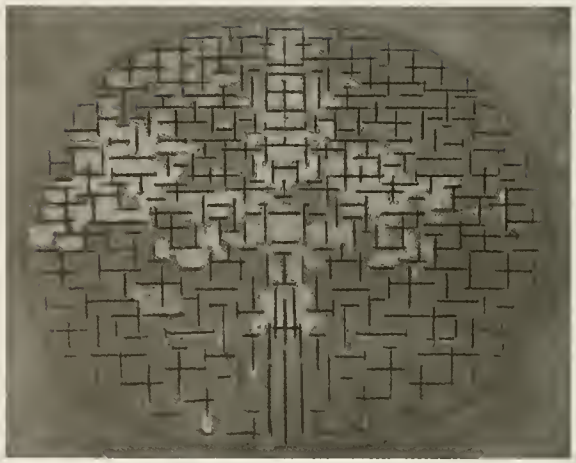


**Fig. 5** Piet Mondrian, *Pier and Ocean*, 1914.



even geometrical and Cubist. Finally, in the last paintings, the canvasses became nonsense, or nonsense to me - mere chaotic lines and blotches of paint...perhaps, in his Cubist period, there might have been both artistic and pathological development, colluding to engender an original form."[8]

[8] Ibid., p. 16.

What kind of judgment is this that allows the neurologist to make decisions regarding the most creative moment in the artistic journey of a painter, even an amateur one? What would prohibit another doctor, possibly at an earlier time, to articulate exactly the same judgment regarding the artistic development of painters such as Kandinsky or Mondrian? It is not impossible that the doctor, although unconsciously, sees in his patient the artistic course of a painter such as Mondrian,[9] who, throughout his life, strove to develop his famous trees and seascapes into the purely abstract compositions of his later creative period (Fig. 5). If the doctor's judgment of the patient's art is primarily an aesthetic one, would it then follow that the medical opinion deeming "visual agnosia" a neurological disorder is at the same time an aesthetic judgment?

[9] We can think of the artistic biography of Mondrian as a metaphor "from" the picture of things (the tree, the sea) "to" a pure, non-figurative geometric form.

We could attempt to look at neurology's undertaking from an aesthetic point of view. Applying this reversal mechanically, we ascribe a pathological content to aesthetic phenomena, especially during their modern manifestation. We project onto the general convention of modernity the condition of visual agnosia, which has stricken Dr. Sacks's patient due to the fateful development of an ocular tumor. It is not only the disorder's tendency toward abstraction that matches modern art's conventions. Other manifestations of this generalized visual agnosia, such as the distortion of the human face typical of expressionism[10] or the surrealist transposition of names and objects, can be found in Dr. P's pathology. The patient, as if fulfilling a distant prophecy by René Magritte, takes his wife's head for his own hat. How is it then possible for the patient's symptoms, expressionism, surrealism, and visual abstraction to converge on formulating modern visual perception?

[10] Ibid., p. 12

Suddenly, trusting the description of an isolated neurological disorder of visual agnosia, we tend to reach conclusions regarding the general con-

dition of art in our century. This undertaking may not be futile, even though we realize that this metaphor between pathology and art is completely arbitrary. Liberating aesthetic judgment from the strict confines imposed by the discipline of aesthetics and allowing it to wander freely in the vast territory of anthropological studies, it might return to its original discipline (of aesthetics), bearing an unexpected hypothesis for further inquiry. The culturally constant, modern way of seeing holistically belongs to a dark and obscure realm that could well be named visual agnosia.

To this point, we have apparently considered the real question of our hypothesis as given. However, what significance do we finally attach to the term visual agnosia? The word "agnosia" is Greek and is comprised of the word "gnosis" (γνωσις), meaning "knowledge," preceded by the privative "α." Therefore, "agnosia" signifies the inability to gain knowledge. As a conceptual formulation, "visual agnosia" embodies an innate paradox, and it is surely this paradox that highlights the pathological condition described by this medical term; namely, the description of a blindness caused not by an ocular malfunction but rather by a mental one. Nevertheless, what is it that allows us to separate the eye from the mind or sight from intellect in order to apply a paradoxical as well as poetic term such as visual agnosia?

In ancient Greek, the word for "idea" (ιδεα) and the verb "to know" (οιδα) have the same root as the verb "to see" (ορω). The act of seeing, therefore, is deeply rooted in and inevitably associated with the concept of knowledge, as much as knowledge is in turn innately lit by the totality of seeing. The platonic idea (ιδεα) and the Aristotelian species (ειδος) incorporate the memory of this relationship between the visible cosmos (κοσμος) and the knowledge thereof. Reconsidering the previously mentioned fundamental affinity of seeing and knowing, we return to the term "visual agnosia." Even if we had to generalize this term, as in the preceding text where it was arbitrarily applied to define the condition of the modern world, this generalization would hardly denote that the modern world is pathological in its entirety. It would simply connote that, through art, the modern world has experienced the consequences of a linguistic transformation; sight is no longer conceived of as innately related to understanding and knowledge. The relationship between sight and knowledge is constantly and continuously redefined. Consequently, modern art can be interpreted as an ongoing pursuit to observe the world in terms of the radical incompatibility between visible phenomena and knowledge thereof. This divide between the truth of appearances as a condition of seeing and the truth of appearances as a condition of knowing could indeed lead to a redefinition of visual agnosia, well beyond the medical terminology of brain specialists. More specifically, we could consider as visual agnosia the dynamic pursuit in a ruinous landscape of a historically concluded momentous separation; the separation of vision from knowledge and the consequent ongoing quest for their coexistence, however fleeting, in works of modern art.

*This essay was originally written in Greek; English translation by A. Macheras.

**Fig. 1** Ambrogio Lorenzetti, *A Group of Poor Clares*, ca. 1329 (NG 1147, National Gallery, London).

# Virtually Visible

Diane Ghirardo

Alessio Laurentani fell in love with Lucrezia Casasanta the moment he saw a sample of her needlework. That, and the warm recommendation of Livia, wife of his friend Pietro, convinced the thirty-five-year-old custodian that he should pursue her even though they had never met.[1] Alessio's desire to marry Lucrezia persisted for two years as he assembled the funds for a donation to the conservatory where she lived and relied on go-betweens to exchange information with Lucrezia. Like many other young women who were either orphans, daughters of prostitutes, or abandoned by families too poor to care for them, Lucrezia lived in a convent until she married or decided to become a nun. Hand labor such as cloth production or embroidery and donations from pious patrons covered a girl's maintenance until a prospective husband had made a significant donation to the convent in exchange for her dowry.

Alessio's suit became desperate when he learned that Lucrezia planned to become a nun. He visited a friend whose apartment overlooked the courtyard adjoining S. Caterina, where he finally managed to see and communicate with Lucrezia and some of her friends on several occasions. Through hand signals, head nodding, and a handkerchief that Lucrezia finally tossed into the courtyard for him, the couple affirmed their intentions to marry. Some of these exchanges took place after Lucrezia took her vows and donned the religious habit, a barrier as powerful as the walls of S. Caterina's cloister, but Alessio remained convinced that she was being forced to take the

[1] Archivio di Stato, Roma (henceforth ASR), Tribunale Criminale Del Governatore (henceforth Trib Crim), Processi 1500-1559, 14 February 1559. Part of Alessio's tale is recounted by Maria Elena Vasaio in "Il tessuto della virtù. Le zitelle di S. Eufemia e di S. Caterina dei Funari nella Controriforma," *Memoria* 11-12 (1984), 53-64, esp. pp. 59-63.

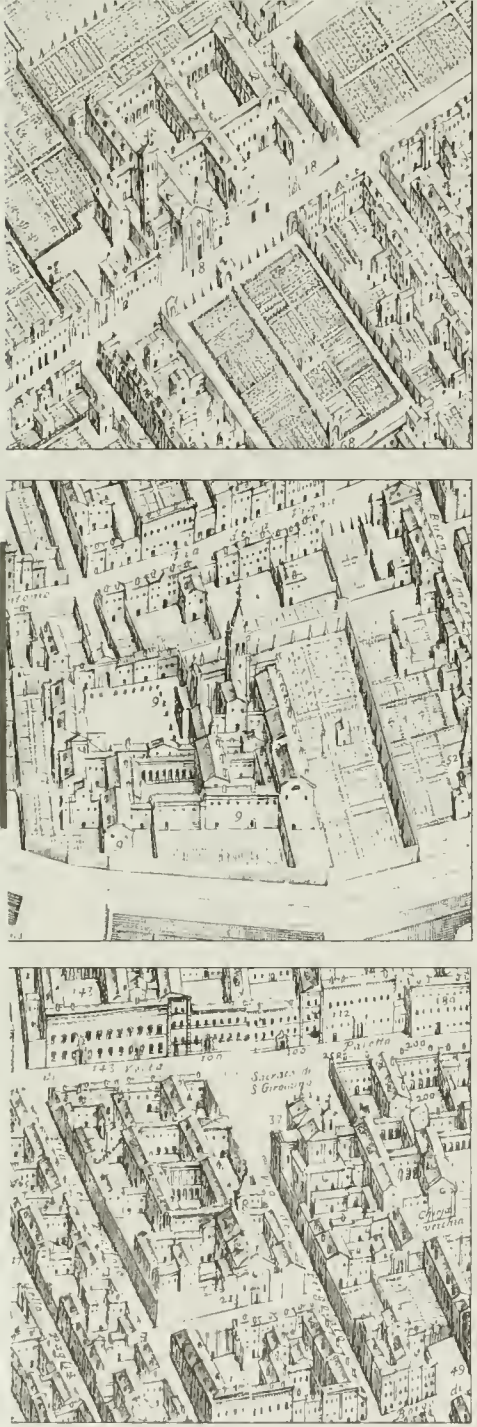


**Fig. 2** All from Andrea Bolzoni, *Map of Ferrara, 1782* (courtesy author):
a. Convent of S. Caterina da Siena, Ferrara. S. Caterina is the complex numbered 18.
b. Convent of S. Antonio in Polesine, Ferrara. S. Antonio is numbered 9.
c. Convent of Corpus Domini, Ferrara. Corpus Domini is numbered 21.

vows against her will. Alessio's arrest in 1559 on a charge of violating the sanctity of the cloister and attempting to kidnap a young nun sprang from his efforts to press his case by contacting Lucrezia directly.[2]

This story illustrates the barriers - architectural and otherwise - that were erected in Renaissance Italy to keep young women out of the public eye and, specifically, unavailable to the male gaze. Lucrezia lived in the conservatory of S. Caterina dei Funari in Rome, near the Crypta Balbi and the Theater of Marcellus. The Compagnia delle Vergini Miserabili was established by Ignatius Loyola between 1537-1543 as a place where girls between ten and twelve at risk of falling into prostitution could be sheltered and taught household arts until they married or became nuns.[3] Convents, conservatories, and hospitals throughout Italy warehoused a large percentage of the female population in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The rising cost of dowries made marriage expensive, leading many families to elect the convent for some of their daughters, since generalized fears about unattached women made it impossible for unmarried women to live alone. Thought to be weak by nature, women were too vulnerable to the attentions of males if left unprotected—that is, unmarried—and even their presence on the street could cause a serious stain on family honor. Convents conveniently kept the women out of sight in respectable settings and far from unattached males.[4]

Fifteenth and sixteenth century convents were large, walled enclosures, almost self-sufficient enclaves in Renaissance cities. Erected between 1499 and 1501, the convent of S. Caterina da Siena in Ferrara included cells for 95 nuns and 46 novices disposed in two storeys around two large courtyards, a smaller courtyard, and an entrance court (Fig. 2a). The compound also included an infirmary, granary, chicken coop, refectory, dormitory, chapter house, church with bell tower, and a large garden.[5] Unlike many of the more than two dozen other convents in Ferrara in the sixteenth century, this one was designed and built all at one time. Each such convent typically housed about one hundred nuns and an

[2] Unfortunately, the archives in Rome do not record the fate of Alessio and Lucrezia; after several depositions by Alessio, the records simply terminate.

[3] Barbara J. Sabatine, "The Church of Santa Caterina dei Funari and the Vergini Miserabili of Rome," unpublished PhD dissertation, UCLA, 1992. See also the booklet published by the Conservatorio di S. Caterina della Rosa, "S. Caterina dei Funari, La storia del Monastero e della Chiesa," Rome, n.d.

[4] There are many sources for nuns and convents during the Renaissance; a brief introduction to convents in the Po Valley and Ferrara is Gabriella Zarri, "Pietà e profezia alle corti padane: le pie consigliere dei principi," in Paolo Rossi, ed. *Il Rinascimento nelle corti padane. Società e cultura* (Bari: De Donato, 1977), pp. 201-238.

[5] Thomas Tuohy, *Herculean Ferrara. Ercole d'Este, 1471-1505, and the invention of a ducal capital* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1996), pp. 371-2.

equally large number of girls of all ages. The convent of S. Antonio Abate (in Polesine), parts of which dated back to the thirteenth century, was even larger (Figs. 2b and 3).

Convents and conservatories such as S. Caterina dei Funari became increasingly common during the sixteenth century, when the reforming fever of the Counter Reformation heightened fears of female debauchery and led to more vigorous efforts to remove unmarried girls and women from public view. Bolstered by the unquestioned assumption that women needed to be spatially controlled, single women and girls in particular, virtually any event served as a pretext for shepherding girls into a conservatory. Ferrara's major earthquake in 1570 apparently left many girls and young women homeless, but Duchess Barbara d'Austria quickly remedied that by establishing the conservatory of S. Barbara.[6] Only twenty years later, another convent, S. Margarita, was established for spinsters and beggars reduced to poverty and misery by the poor economic conditions, and, in particular, to save girls in danger of being raped.[7]

The subjects of these rescue efforts had little say in the matter. The statutes of conservatories explicitly permitted girls to be removed from morally dangerous situations, such as living with a mother who was a prostitute, without the permission of either the girl or her mother.[8] Indeed, conservatories such as S. Caterina dei Funari were specifically established to prevent girls from falling into prostitution. Once installed in these conservatories, unless they married or took religious vows, girls could not leave except to be lent out as servants for local families.

Unlike Alessio, most men preferred to see a young woman before they decided to marry her. Although they kept the girls securely cloistered within the convents, administrators of conservatories conducted annual processions in which men were allowed to view the girls and select a bride. At S. Caterina, girls were paraded to the nearby churches of the Gesù and S. Maria sopra Minerva, or to the church of SS. Apostoli and back, while the orphans at Santo Spirito traversed the Borgo from the Tiber to St. Peter's for their processions.[9] In 1611, 157 girls took part in the procession, but none were held for the next twenty years because one girl was either abducted or ran off. The processions resumed only when it became apparent that men were no longer seeking out the girls as wives. Thus, the doors of the cloister did open on rare occasions but only to make their wards available to the male gaze, albeit briefly.

It is something of an irony then, that although the chief function of convents was to keep women out of sight, one of the major concerns of civic leaders in the Renaissance was to bring nuns of saintly reputation to occupy the city's convents. The chief architect of this policy for Ferrara was Duke Ercole I, who spared no expense to induce reputedly holy women from elsewhere in Italy to come to Ferrara. Suor Lucia Brocadelli of Viterbo, who was reported to have the marks of Christ's wounds in her body (the *stigmata*) was vigorously pursued by Ercole for years. He promised her a new convent (S. Caterina di Siena) in the

6 Marc'Antonio Guarini, *Compendio Historico dell'origine, accrescimento e Prerogative delle Chiese, e Luoghi Pii, della città, e diocesi di Ferrara* (Ferrara: Vittorio Baldini, 1630), pp. 330-331.

7 Guarini, *Compendio Historico*, 208.

8 Sabatine, "The Church of Santa Caterina dei Funari," pp. 26-28.

9 "S. Caterina dei Funari," pp. 13-14.



**Fig. 3** Convent of S. Antonio in Polesine, Ferrara. Refectory (Gabinetto Fotografico Nazionale, Rome).

recently enlarged northern part of the city known as the Terranova. Suor Lucia consented to make the change, but the city of Viterbo proved unwilling to release its favorite daughter. Even papal orders failed to move the city fathers. When all else failed, Ercole's ambassadors resorted to concealing her in a basket to carry her out of the city. Greeted with great pomp when she arrived with her entourage in Ferrara, Suor Lucia settled in the new convent duly completed in 1502. At around the same time, Ercole also persuaded Suor Beatrice and thirteen companions to leave Rome for the monastery of S. Niccolò del Cortile, and another reputed saint, Suor Colomba of Viterbo, to move to Ferrara, both in 1502.[10] Duchess Eleonora had also successfully negotiated the transfer in 1480 of Suor Dorotea and seven companions from Reggio to take up residence in the convent of S. Gabriele.[11]

[10] *Diario Ferrarese, dall'anno 1409 sino al 1502 di Autori incerti*, Giuseppe Pardi, ed., in L. Muratori, *Rerum Italicum Scriptores* (Bologna: Nicolo Zanichelli, 1928), p. 279.
[11] Guarini, *Compendio Historico*, p. 61.





Once installed in their convents, however, no matter how widespread their reputations for sanctity, the women remained out of sight for all but a few noble women and the priest charged with supervising the convent. The nuns were not expected to perform any visible public role; on the contrary, their public responsibility was precisely to be invisible while they prayed for the well-being of the city and its residents. With their prayers, the nuns were expected to erect a holy barrier against evil, plague, and bad luck, a virtual set of walls deemed as efficacious as the brick bastions that surrounded the city. Michele Savonarola reported that Ercole's predecessor Duke Borso d'Este patronized the churches of S. Antonio in Polesine and Corpus Domini in Ferrara, where "one hundred and fifty virgins pray day and night to God on behalf of our city" (Figs. 2b and 2c).[12] Their prayers were also considered to be efficacious on an individual level. Hence, numerous ferrarese citizens of both sexes and all classes left bequests to the various convents in exchange for prayers, masses, or other devotions to be conducted on behalf of the deceased.[13]

[12] Charles Rosenberg, "Art in Ferrara in the Reign of Borso d'Este, A Study in Court Patronage," PhD Dissertation, University of Michigan, 1974, p. 104.
[13] In his will of 22 July 1591, Alfonso Cataneo, physician, leaves funds for girls in three of the city's conservatories as dowries, in exchange for masses celebrated for his soul. Archivio di Stato, Ferrara, Archivio Opera Pia, Libro B, no. 37.

Males in the secular and religious hierarchies of Renaissance Italian cities were extremely uncomfortable about women living alone or in groups outside the convent, with all that such living implied about the absence of supervision by male clerics. Lay communities, groups of women living together in piety but without taking religious vows, flourished in the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries but were gradually forced to disband or regularize the membership by entering a specific religious order (Fig. 7). Such was the case with Corpus Domini in Ferrara, which began as a lay community; after the death of the founder, Bernardina Sedezzari, it was forced to recompose as a community of Poor Clare nuns within twenty-five years.[14]

[14] For a summary of the story of Corpus Domini's transformations in the first half of the fifteenth century, see Mary Martin McLaughlin, "Creating and Recreating Communities of Women," *Signs* (Winter 1989), pp. 293-321.

Access to the women was controlled by a series of sophisticated mechanisms from clothing to the architecture of the convents themselves. Clothes provided the most intimate line of defense. Upon taking religious vows, nuns donned robes of black and white that covered them from head to foot to hands; severe headdresses and veils covered hair, head, and throat (Fig. 1). Girls living in the convents awaiting marriage or permanent admission into the monastic community wore equally severe robes, usually grey, and less elaborate veils to conceal their hair.

5

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**Fig. 4** Wall on southern flank of S. Antonio in Polesine (author).

**Fig. 5** Wall of Corpus Domini on via Campofranco (author).



Once a nun took her vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, she became permanently off-limits to all males except her confessor and the priest who served mass. The habit became the visible symbol of her status, a barrier that no male could legally penetrate. Lucrezia's gesture of tossing the handkerchief she had embroidered to Alessio across the courtyard constituted a remarkable act of defiance, a breach of the rules of behavior in late sixteenth century convents all the more remarkable for having been done by a woman who had already donned the nun's habit.

In the Middle Ages, cities such as Ferrara consistently located convents outside the city walls or on the periphery of the inhabited area; spatial location well away from residences insured a degree of invisibility. The site of S. Antonio in Polesine, for example, was originally an island in the Po on the south-eastern boundary of Ferrara, an area enclosed within the city's walls only in 1442. By the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, most convents had been incorporated within city walls. In Ferrara, this happened in the last decade of the fifteenth century, when Ercole erected a new set of walls and vastly enlarged the area incorporated within them.

The high walls of the convents served as the most visible barrier to the outside world. Although city streets in Ferrara and other Renaissance Italian cities were lined by walled enclosures for family *palazzi* as well as less noble dwellings, a convent was immediately recognizable because of the virtually uninterrupted expanse of its brick walls. Openings through which passersby could see into the interior of the compound or from which those inside could look out were strictly forbidden (Figs. 4 and 5).

No efforts to protect women in convents from seeing or being seen were spared. The windows at S. Maria delle Grazie in Ferrara were raised in order to prevent the nuns from seeing outside, but more serious was Duchess Eleonora's concern that Franciscan monks at the nearby monastery of San Francesco could see the nuns of Corpus Domini from their bell tower. In August 1493, she ordered that the tower be permanently sealed. The monks launched a protest with Duke Ercole,

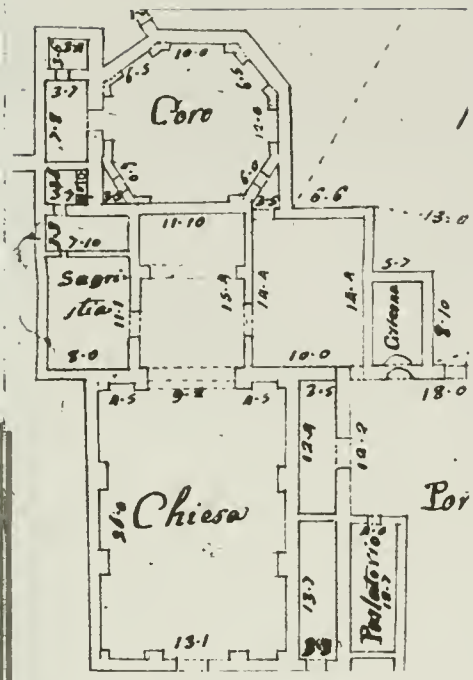



**Fig. 6** S. Giustina, Ferrara, plan. (Archivio Fotografico del Comune di Ferrara).

**Fig. 7** Female members of a lay confraternity, Anonymous Milanese, ca 1500 (NG 780, National Gallery, London).

and, although he was sympathetic, he announced that he was unwilling to contradict his wife.[15]

Such walls firmly delimited the convent's borders and signaled the entire set of institutional arrangements that governed the women living inside. Women in convents lived in communities governed by a mother superior or abbess, who in turn was supervised by priests from a local church. A board of pious laymen further managed a convent's affairs. Despite the cloister, the nuns vigorously defended their property and affairs. Archives in Ferrara record the efforts of nuns in the various convents to secure inheritances and pious donations and defend them against families reluctant to disburse funds or yield property left in bequests by deceased relatives.[16]

Once inside the convent, further barriers separated nuns from outsiders. When attending religious functions in church, nuns sat in the chorus (*coro*) behind the altar, separated from non-members who might be attending mass by single or double grilles (Fig. 6). The chorus area itself usually consisted of elaborately carved wooden seats and pictorial decorations representing sacred subjects. If family members, officials, or tradesmen needed to meet with a nun, they went to a room known as the *parlatorio*, or talking room (see Fig. 6, the room to the right of the church). Because of cloister rules that forbade visitors from seeing or touching nuns, a wheel, or *roda*, was devised that allowed a nun to be heard or receive an object without being seen (Fig. 8). Set into the wall in a wood frame, the *roda* consisted of two wooden circles set horizontally and linked by a vertical pivot. Three vertical panels were placed so that one could rotate the *roda* to transfer objects without being seen.

The spatial control of women during the Renaissance was asserted through laws and religious practices, but it was formalized with a series of physical barriers. Some were more effective than others; despite S. Caterina's *roda*, grilles, walls, and lack of

15 Tuohy, *Herculean Ferrara*, p. 180; Diario ferrarese, p. 131.

16 The Archivio di Stato, Ferrara, contains the records of diverse convents in a record group known as Opera Pia Orfanotrofi e Conservatori di Ferrara.

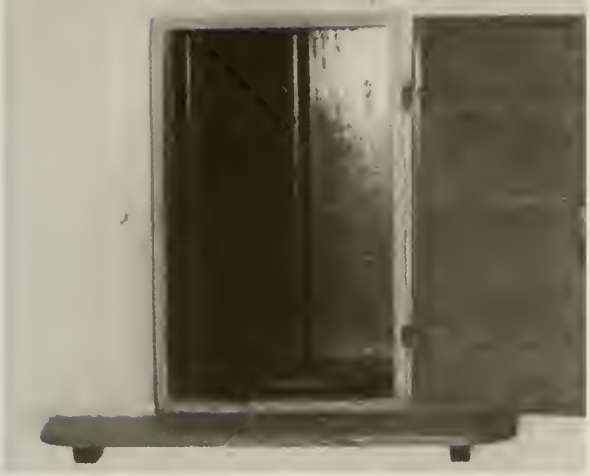


**Fig. 8** Corpus Domini, Ferrara. *Roda* (author).



windows, as we saw, Alessio and Lucrezia managed to see one another and communicate across an adjacent courtyard. Ferrara's convents were typical of those in most Italian cities, largely demolished in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries or transformed to radically different uses.

The greatest legacy of Renaissance spatial practices as embodied in the convents, however, has been in obscuring or ignoring these places for women in the history of Renaissance architecture. None of the current major textbooks on Renaissance or post-Classical architecture includes any female convents. Spiro Kostof's three books on cities do not include a single illustration of a female monastery, nor do the survey texts by Trachtenberg and Hyman, Heydenreich and Lotz, and Peter Murray.[17] The assumption nurtured by such omissions is that the architectural design of female monasteries is uninteresting and therefore not worth including in such surveys. It is possible to turn this assumption on its head by asserting that architecture gives physical form to spatial practices. Shaped as they are by conceptual schemes about the world, people, political, social, and economic roles, and spatial practices, the buildings and urban configurations that they produce repeat and reinforce those selfsame governing assumptions. The desire of men during the Renaissance to remove large numbers of women from public view by closeting them in convents ritually reinforced their spatial isolation, an attitude repeated in subsequent generations when female monasteries were demolished or ignored rather than celebrated as many male monasteries have been.

The modest goal of this short essay is to make visible the buildings and spatial practices for women in convents and to contribute to rethinking how we teach and understand architectural history.[18]

[17] Spiro Kostof, *A History of Architecture: Settings and Rituals* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); Kostof, *The City Assembled: The Elements of Urban Form through History* (Boston: Little Brown, 1992); Kostof, *The City Shaped: Urban Patterns and Meanings through History* (Boston: Little Brown, 1991); Marvin Trachtenberg and Isabelle Hyman, *Architecture: From Prehistory to Post-Modernism* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1986); L.H. Heydenreich and W. Lotz, *Architecture in Italy 1400-1600* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974); Peter Murray, *The Architecture of the Italian Renaissance* (New York: Schocken Books, 1966).

[18] I have proposed a more general survey of women's spaces in "Women and Space in a Renaissance Italian City," in Iain Borden and Jane Rendell, eds. *InterSections: Architectural Histories and Critical Theories* (London: Routledge, 2000), forthcoming.

*This project would not have been possible without the generous grant provided by the Graham Foundation for early research. I am also indebted to Lisa Mahar for help with the illustrations; Eunice Howe of USC for wonderfully provocative discussions; the University of Technology, Sydney's Dean of Research, Steve Harfield, who allowed me time to develop my research into presentations and this paper; Loretta, Luisa, Laura, and Liliana of the Archivo di Stato, Ferrara; and Maestro Adriano Franceschini of Ferrara. Special mention goes to the students in the class on Women and Space I taught at MIT in 1998, whose thoughtful (and boundlessly energetic!) participation helped me refine my theoretical premises.

# Lapidary Readings



Mark Jarzombek

It is natural to think of space in terms of voids, and structure in terms of solids. But in these examples from the work of Francesco Borromini, that binary logic does not apply. Rather, one finds within the lapidary a hybrid reality composed not only of overlapping structural elements but also of "spaces" that are literally not there. This play in front of the surface of the architecture and inside its volume creates an unsettling ambiguity about the architectural status of architecture itself. By the end of the seventeenth century, these experiments would become increasingly remote to mainstream architectural speculation. The mating of column and column and of column and void concealed behind the unifying drapery of the surface – a thematic in which Borromini draws on experiments of Bramante and Michelangelo – would give way to the more rigorous ideals of Neoclassicism or to the more ephemeral ornamentations of the Rococo. The first moved architecture toward the horizon of functionalist modernity, the latter toward the cinematic. Borromini's architecture thus represents much more than a study in "the inexhaustability of classicism." It is an eddy in the development of architecture that would only return as a project of inquiry with our more intense – and more modern – understanding of interiority.

Fig. 1 Sketch; January 9, 1992, Colored pencil and "White-Out" on printed paper (22.5 X 16 cm). Detail from the Oratorio dei Filippini, 1637-52, Rome.

Fig. 2 Sketch, January 4, 1994, Colored pencil and "White-Out" on printed aper (30 X 22.5 cm). Detail from Sant' Ivo della Sapienza, 1643-48, Rome.

MADEMOISELLE D
LE MARQUIS. Vrai Dieu
fraîche comme
Jasmin, à boire, du Sancerre
maraud, verse comme si c'était
ai une santé de fer.
LA BARONNE
LE MARQUIS
vous découvrez
d'herbe?
Vous
d'herbe, mais ce
Que le
Sieur le marquis
temps des grandes
Le règne de la force
pas. C'est aux arts
mais le droit de
aux croisades, il convient
l'intelligence.
LA BARONNE. Oui,
ne compromettent pa
prolongées ou dans
soleil.
LE MARQUIS. Ah!
blante pour la santé,
rhumer.
FACADE
Pier Design
Baroque / Oratory
Rome
M.J. / Jan 92

1

2

3

Fig. 3 Sketch, December 27, 1991; Colored pencil and "White-Out" on printed paper (16.5 X 11 cm). Detail from San Carlo alle Quatro Fontane, 1638-39, Rome.

In the often illusory frameworks that govern our knowledge, one might advance specifically to get lost, to intoxicate oneself in dizzying syntaxes, to seek out odd intersections of meaning, strange fragments of history, and unexpected echoes. This quest is both pleasurable and melancholic. Though full of possibly bottomless fictions, it enables one to encounter the endless interchange of architecture and counter-architecture. In these cases, the lapidary stands before one not as an integral part of some other, predetermined knowledge system, but as an object unto itself. It is an object that cannot be communicated or exchanged. It thus provokes an anxiety about its unfamiliar identity. But in probing its status – fixing it with numbers, measure, and geometry – one is not aiming to reduce it, yet again, to some larger system of cognition. Its identity ends where the drawing ends, or perhaps, in the invisible margins just beyond the page.

# How The Invisible Stays That Way

Garry Stevens





## I have spent the past few years trying to develop a coherent sociological description of architects, their profession, and the profession's history.

The reception of my studies, summarized in *The Favored Circle* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998), has revealed a significant resistance to a sociological analysis of the hidden operations of the architectural field. Certain elements have even suggested that, since I am not a practicing architect, I could not hope to understand what is going on.[1] Responding to my critics, I will outline my arguments here, which I present in detail in my book, and offer a commentary on the relationship between sociology and architecture.

[1] I do have a degree in architecture, but to these critics it seems that only practicing architects can produce a description of the field.

There is, I think, a fundamental difference in the attitudes that architecture and sociology take towards people. Sociology has always been, in the main, the sociology of the underdog.[2] Why do some groups stay at the bottom of the social ladder? What prevents some from succeeding? Why is wealth unequally distributed? Architecture, on the other hand, has always been the architecture of the heroic. I always found that *The Fountainhead* got a rousing reception from my architecture students. Those buildings we call "architecture" are invariably buildings of power and taste made for people of power and taste; their creators, the great architects, striding like colossi through the history books, fighting to actualize their singular visions.

[2] See R. Collins, "Commentary on Scheff," *Sociological Perspectives* (40, 1997), p. 544.

Another part of the problem is that many people have difficulty seeing sociological problems really *as* problems. One of the questions I tried to answer in my book was why some architects are successful and others are not. Initially, one has to dissect the term "successful" and understand that there are two different ways to interpret it (Fig. 1). One of them is achieving a high position in professional and economic power structures. Such people have high "temporal capital," in the sociological jargon. Undoubtedly, attaining high office in the American Institute of Architects or running the largest firm in the country would count as outstanding success. In these terms, Frank Lloyd Wright was not at all successful; he did achieve success, however, in what we could call an "intellectual," non-economically-based sense. These two forms of success are quite distinct. It is actually quite uncommon for individuals to achieve both. Most people would explain an architect's success in the Wrightian sense as a result of "talent"; a few others might also add "opportunity." However, these factors fail to explain several empirical facts about the

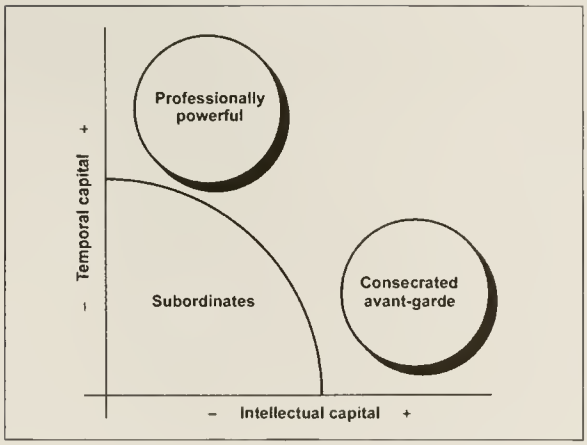



**Fig. 1** The forms of capital in the architectural field, defining its social space.



profession. Statistical data shows, for example, that architects, as well as other visual artists, are drawn from the upper strata of society; in fact, the higher the stratum of origin, the greater the chances of success. Typical occupations for children from lower middle-class families include nursing, the police, teaching, and accountancy – but not architecture.

Why should class be so important for a career in architecture? Partly because of the fact that a high class origin gives aspirants access to the "right" kind of people. The sociological term for this is "social capital." The talented must have the opportunity to show their talent, and this cannot be done without financing, since architecture requires for its actualization resources vastly greater than probably any other art. But there are other, more readily obtained resources that can be leveraged from social capital. Knowing the gatekeepers of the great galleries and museums, working with a famous architect, or coming to the attention of the right journal editor can lead to exhibitions of drawings, to monographs published in periodicals, or to an article or two. Those who run the museums and galleries cannot provide you with the money to build, but they can display your unbuilt work to the world, which will in turn lead to commissions.

We should consider what architecture schools do. Apart from teaching skills and providing knowledge, they provide the social induction that the young architect-to-be must have. Every profession inculcates a value system into its students, although most of these values remain obscured and unsaid. The diploma the students receive after so many years not only certifies that they have certain skills, but that they possess a general level of culture. Ways of acting, of talking, of dressing; attitudes, dispositions, and tastes must all be instilled. The student must learn all the cultural aspects of what it is to be an architect, what books should be read, which films should be seen. More than in many other jobs, success in architecture relies less in "knowing" and more in "being." In a sense, architects are acculturated through personal interactions with those whom they wish to become. Hence the longevity of the studio system in architectural education, so different from the impersonal lecture rooms of the other disciplines. Hence, also, the

absence of long-distance or correspondence education in architecture. You won't find architectural design in the Open University's curricula (architectural history-yes, design-no).

These operations have often been referred to as the "hidden" curriculum, but this terms implies that someone is actively hiding something. I don't think this is true. Teachers teach in the best of faith. The fact that, apart from skills, they also teach what is a veritable way of life – I have often heard architecture described as a "calling" – is a process that occurs beneath the consciousness of the individuals involved in it. No one asks that the student acquire all the tacit and unsaid cultural qualities that are part of the architectural role, but all the subtle pressures of teachers' expectations and those of fellow students gently push the individual onto the right paths.

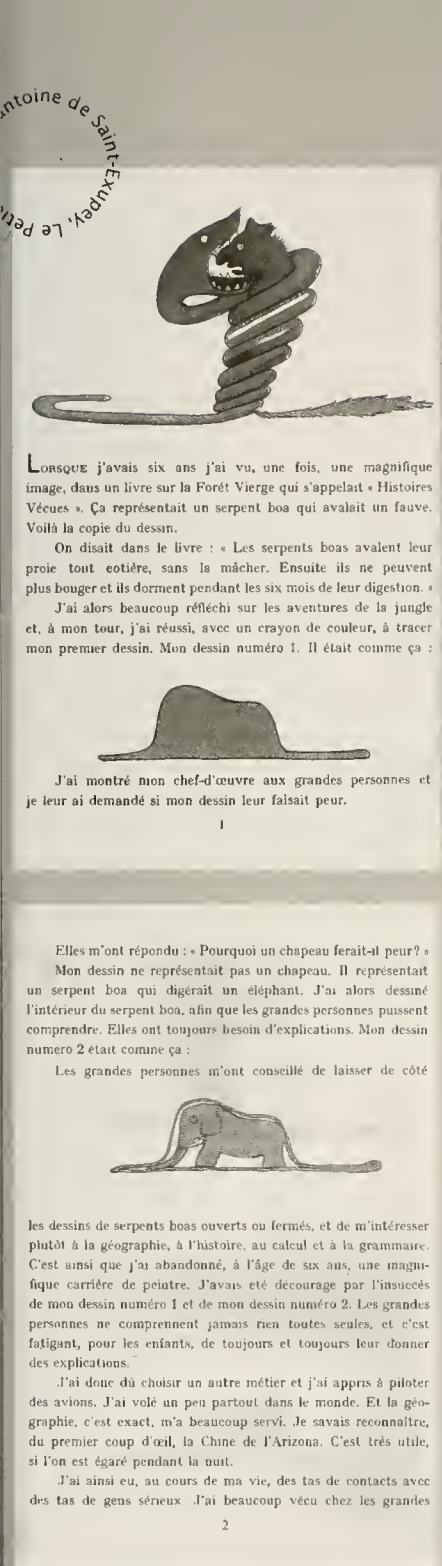




Most powerful social forces operate in a covert way. The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, upon whose work my analysis is based, ascribes their power to two attributes that he calls "naturality" and "misrecognition."[3] By the term "naturality," he refers to the fact that many processes are taken to be simply the natural order of things. They are accepted without question as the perfectly natural way of doing things. Alternatives are never thought about because the rightness of the social world is taken as self-evident. Of course the studio system is the heart of architectural education. How else could you teach design? That's just the way things are. Of course the great architects are persons of taste and discernment. How could it be otherwise? On the other hand, Bourdieu calls "misrecognition" the fact that the social forces bearing upon each of us are misperceived. Typically, these forces are misperceived as perfectly legitimate demands imposed upon us. For example, in the formative years, the life of the architecture student is a notoriously sleepless one. Indeed, students will boast of the long nights they have spent at the drawing board. Later on, as practitioners, many architects decide that one way to get ahead is to become active in their local professional associations. But no one explicitly demands any of these things: they are self-imposed requirements, and it is self-imposition that makes them so potent. This explains why the sociologist faces quite a struggle when trying to render visible these hidden social forces to those who are directly affected by them.

[3] Discussions of these concepts can found in P. Bourdieu, *Sociology in Question* (London: Sage, 1993).

There is a further complication, though. Sociological work often threatens vested interests inside the discourse and the profession of architecture. One of the directions my research suggests, for example, is that architecture should leave the universities and return to some sort of structured apprenticeship system. However, this is unlikely to be accepted by either academics or practitioners, who naturally prefer to see the cost of training borne by others. It is so often in the interests of powerful players for the "invisible" to remain that way. Acting in the best of faith, they nonetheless disguise, to themselves as to others, their *self-interest* as *disinterest*; they do not admit that there is something to be revealed but say instead that *there is nothing to be seen.*



ntoine de Saint-Exupéry, Le petit

Lorsque j'avais six ans j'ai vu, une fois, une magnifique image, dans un livre sur la Forêt Vierge qui s'appelait « Histoires Vécues ». Ça représentait un serpent boa qui avalait un fauve. Voilà la copie du dessin.

On disait dans le livre : « Les serpents boas avalent leur proie tout entière, sans la mâcher. Ensuite ils ne peuvent plus bouger et ils dorment pendant les six mois de leur digestion. »

J'ai alors beaucoup réfléchi sur les aventures de la jungle et, à mon tour, j'ai réussi, avec un crayon de couleur, à tracer mon premier dessin. Mon dessin numéro 1. Il était comme ça :

J'ai montré mon chef-d'œuvre aux grandes personnes et je leur ai demandé si mon dessin leur faisait peur.

1

Elles m'ont répondu : « Pourquoi un chapeau ferait-il peur? »

Mon dessin ne représentait pas un chapeau. Il représentait un serpent boa qui digérait un éléphant. J'ai alors dessiné l'intérieur du serpent boa, afin que les grandes personnes puissent comprendre. Elles ont toujours besoin d'explications. Mon dessin numero 2 était comme ça :

Les grandes personnes m'ont conseillé de laisser de côté

les dessins de serpents boas ouverts ou fermés, et de m'intéresser plutôt à la géographie, à l'histoire, au calcul et à la grammaire. C'est ainsi que j'ai abandonné, à l'âge de six ans, une magnifique carrière de peintre. J'avais été découragé par l'insuccès de mon dessin numéro 1 et de mon dessin numéro 2. Les grandes personnes ne comprennent jamais rien toutes seules, et c'est fatigant, pour les enfants, de toujours et toujours leur donner des explications.

J'ai donc dû choisir un autre métier et j'ai appris à piloter des avions. J'ai volé un peu partout dans le monde. Et la géographie, c'est exact, m'a beaucoup servi. Je savais reconnaître, du premier coup d'œil, la Chine de l'Arizona. C'est très utile, si l'on est égaré pendant la nuit.

J'ai ainsi eu, au cours de ma vie, des tas de contacts avec des tas de gens sérieux. J'ai beaucoup vécu chez les grandes

2

# Edith Ackermann & Krsysztof Wodiczko
## *in conversation*



An internationally renowned artist, Krzysztof Wodiczko is Professor in the Visual Studies Program of the Department of Architecture at MIT and Director of the Interrogative Design Work Group at the Center for Advanced Visual Studies (CAVS). Wodiczko is recipient of the fourth Hiroshima Art Prize and was recently invited and will participate in the International Section of the 2000 Biennale in Venice.

A developmental psychologist by training, Edith Ackermann investigates collaborative learning, constructive play, and creative work/design in technology-mediated environments. She is currently Professor of Developmental Psychology at the University of Aix-Marseille, France, and Visiting Professor at the MIT Department of Architecture.

Wodiczko and Ackermann co-teach the course "Interrogative Design Workshop," which, for the 1999-2000 academic year, addresses the design of "Equipment for the Voiceless and the Speechless."

The following conversation took place on October 25, 1999. During our meeting, I presented to them excerpts from four essays and recorded their reactions.

Garyfallia Katsavounidou
editor

## One

"In 1983, French television launched *Une minute pour une image*, a program conceived and directed by Agnes Varda. True to its title, the show lasted just one minute, during which time a single photograph was projected onto the screen and a voice-over commentary was spoken. The sources of these reactions to the given photograph varied enormously – from photographers, writers, political figures, or art critics to a range of respondents that one could call the man-on-the-street: bakers, taxi drivers, workers in a pizza parlor, businessmen. This very gathering of responses from a wide spectrum of viewers, in its resemblance to an opinion poll and its insistence on photography as a vehicle for the expression of public reaction, was a continuation, whether intentional or not, of a certain tradition in France of understanding photography though the methods of sociology, and insisting that this is the only coherent way of considering it."





**Ackermann**: I regard readers' activities as ways of *recasting* what is offered by a text or an image. Of course it happens within certain boundaries that the artifact encourages, but if there is not some active quest on the part of the reader, then nothing is read. An idea that comes to mind is that if you give yourself the exercise of looking at an image for one minute, the very decision to *pause* transforms its meaning. You enter into a kind of dialogue with the image, like in the living portraits created by Andy Warhol.

**Wodiczko**: Behind this title [*Une minute pour une image*], there is a conservative assumption that if we could only look longer at the image and spare a minute we could discover something or would establish a new relationship. It also suggests that what's happening in our everyday lives, this very fragmented and temporary relationship to the images, is something wrong. Is that really important, *how long* we are looking at the image? Is it really true that if you look longer you will *discover* something? Our attention and lack of attention switches back and forth and often does this very quickly. But I feel that there are a lot of things happening in that very short period *between the appearance and disappearance of images.* I don't want to suddenly blame speed or temporality for anything; I don't believe that I must always be missing something because of the way I perceive things and the way they are presented to me. I am talking about a different *category* of exposition and perception of images, like in the work of the Futurists, Robert Delaunay, and many others. So, the idea that if we spend time looking at one image we will find something in it worries me; it is more important to see what is missing from it.

**Ackermann**: I am willing to take on the *conservative* side for a while and say that sometimes it can be most liberating, when hurried, to say, "Stop the world, I want to reflect." In a certain sense, this idea of looking at an image for a long time is a way of *de*-contextualizing it from popular culture. If I spend one minute in front of an image, I open it for examination. *I begin to ask my own questions.* But it is also a way of becoming more active as a viewer and reconstructing my own relationship to that image.

**Wodiczko**: Your conservatism, then, is not "conservatist" in a sense: it is exactly how Andy Warhol uses images in his own work, focusing on flatness and surface and appearance and superficiality. "Everyone is equally beautiful. I can't find anybody ugly anymore because I love everybody. Everybody is great. Let's give everybody the same chance." Warhol actually arrested our attention on those fleeting images and said, "Look at them for the first time, as if you were reborn and opened your eyes for the first time, like in realism. *Look at them!*" But in his case this means, "Let's not look at the image but look at the phenomenon. Let's look at the fleeting images and focus on them over a longer time period and see what happens to us." This will help *me*, for example, to understand Dennis Adams's public art projects. The image is there for a few weeks, and those passing by only look at it over a short time period

because they are at a bus stop, etc. People leave and live their lives in a world of images, but when they go back to it another day this one image is always there, seemingly "without reason;" it appears as a "disinterested" image. It becomes clear with time; people realize that since this image is disinterested, everything else there is *not* without interest, as Brecht would say. There must be something else in this image that they neglected to recognize. This is a gradual process of people bringing themselves closer to such an image, even if they only see it for a short time. This is how advertising works in some ways, but this is *more* than advertising; it is using some images that seem to be "familiar," yet no one knows *why*. It is an example of how an artist is actually doing something complex, despite the fact that people don't spend much time with the image.



Two

"Creating a museum from the 'unspoken, unrecorded, unexplained, and overlooked,' Hiller's installation comprises fifty cardboard boxes packed with specifically personal objects. But the poetic connotations of these objects are likely to engage the visitor's own experiences and memories as well. One box, titled *Nama.ma (Mother)*, contains a photocopied diagram showing Uluru cave paintings and Australian native earth in different pigments that were collected by the artist, ground into powder, and placed in cosmetic containers. The work addresses a basic issue of the museum, both for the visitor and the curator: the need for viewers to establish their own rapport with what is presented and to create for themselves a unique, personal poetic experience."

**Ackermann**: As a first attempt, I would say that what these sentences evoke for me is that *any* work of art and – I would like to suggest – any scientific inquiry should create worlds that are *precisely* different from the world of the observer and reveal otherwise hidden events. It could be instruments in music. It could be a kind of prism that suddenly fragments aspects of reality and shows you the different components. It could be retracted mirrors, magnifying glasses, or simulations, all ways of reconstructing aspects of reality but not *mimicking* reality. *Precisely not.*

**Wodiczko**: If what is suggested is an imaginary difference between the inside and the outside of the museum, I don't see any validity to this in the present day world. In terms of imagining new museums and designing new spaces, yes, but in terms of how museums operate today and how the city operates around the museum, I see no difference between outside and inside. The spaces outside the museums actually *are* museums; they have their own curators and directors. There is a highly orchestrated presentation of space that is designed to educate, to convey history, to provide a certain legitimatization for various agencies and action groups or whoever is presenting the city as a successful and well-managed environment. Memorials and monuments are part of that space. They are didactic, public projects intended to "help" people to understand where they are and how to see what is around them. Tours and tourism are parts of all this orchestration of perception, in essence they are no different from museum tours. Museums themselves are profoundly implicated in real estate development, and some of them run very lucrative businesses. They are part of city policy and politics; they make deals, tax breaks, and "public" spaces according to the same rules used by corporations. Therefore, to define the museum as a refuge of any sort is nonsense. For there is a suggestion here that the museum exists to protect this very precious discovery of the "unspoken" and "overlooked." I think this can happen just as successfully or unsuccessfully inside and outside of the museum building. It was Baudelaire who suggested that "artists should fill the blank walls of the city with metaphors." And a lot of avant-garde art

intends for richer and more revealing experiences to happen *outside* museums. So, to reverse it is actually questionable.

**Ackermann**: There is an interesting parallel in my domain, and it relates to the methods used in the social sciences; people make distinctions between the laboratory experiment and the ethnographic study. The former happens under very strong constraints in a space corresponding almost to the museum; the latter happens in an environment that is supposed to be the "natural" environment of the people whom you are interested in studying. I have always been fascinated by arrangements *in between*, spaces that are artificial in the sense that they are preset, but in which dwellers can move about freely: playgrounds of sorts or stages for improvisation. It was my mentor, Jean Piaget, who invented what he called the "clinical" interview. The word is unfortunate because it makes you think of psychotherapy, but the idea is that you create a game-like situation, a playful "exploratorium" in which you intervene in a very minimal way. Other examples are well-designed daycare centers in which you find the kinds of objects toddlers love, like mirrors, windows, or hiding corners. It could be a good idea to think of aspects of the city as embodiments of such intermediary spaces between natural settings and completely constrained ones; to think of interventions in the city as ways of "marking the territory;" and to augment the likelihood of certain activities happening there.





## Three

"As public space becomes saturated by corporate culture, a new generation of artists is emerging. Frustrated by the insulated art world, encouraged by the politicization of art in the 80s, and desirous of the rupture between high and low art, artists are looking into the space of everyday life to find a new canvas. The cement wall, the basketball court, and the bathroom stall have all been recent galleries for these artists. Public art, as it moves away from its traditional association with the bronze-man-on-horse statue, [attempts] to challenge corporate leverage on the production of knowledge and to reclaim public space as the site of political, social, and cultural thought."

**Ackermann**: If I continue my line of thought about laboratories as interesting human-made "exploratoria" where normally hidden events are revealed in different ways, the same applies to architecture, but architects need to address these issues in terms that go beyond the functionalism of everyday objects, buildings, or appliances. Take the door knob at a very basic level... Usually, when they talk about a door knob or a building, they think in functional terms; a doorknob has to *signal* to you that it wants to be pushed or pulled. Probably, architecture becomes interesting when it actually slows down that flow through the inhabited space, when the objects start questioning their own functionality. Wouldn't it be nice if, instead of having you zoom through the space by telling you go here or there, a doorknob would stop your movement for a little while or have a patina that makes you associate it with something else? Like the Duchamp door, for example...

**Wodiczko**: What you are saying now is that architecture should be understood as art; it is still not *public* art, for there is another half of the question that we still have not addressed. I totally agree with you that architecture is art, but then, provided we define it as public art, the issues are whether or not architecture is fulfilling that role sufficiently, if it should, or if we have some idea of how it should. It is not enough for something to be in space that is called "public" to become public, because then everything that is exhibited would become public by virtue of its exhibition. This should not be the

case; we expect more from public art than simply being exposed or accessible. Otherwise, the concept of public has no deeper meaning. I believe that things become public once they are related to the making of public space: when they contribute or are implicated in this process in some conscious, critical, or even unintentional way. These things could end up operating as very disturbing and significant media in making public space the space of perception, of imagination, and of experiencing all those things that are considered *secret* or relegated to the private realm. I don't want to terrorize everybody by implying that everybody has to be conscious and bring out those hidden and private matters and expose them... No, I am not saying that everybody has to be a public artist.

**Ackermann**: I would say that there is a difference between art and architecture that shouldn't be erased; architecture should not be *constantly* allowed to play with the boundaries of public, private, and intimate in people's lives. It should be almost conservative in *allowing* people to choose their level of privacy or intimacy. That is one aspect, and it seems conservative but feels important. There is another aspect, though, concerning spaces that are neither private nor public spaces in architecture. I think of these as "third places," neither "home" nor "work," like the café, the square, the sauna, the bar, or the brothel. These more ambivalent spaces are probably the spaces that artists work with, but they also have an architectural embodiment; they are places for both performance and dwelling.



**Wodiczko**: Very good point. I enthusiastically embrace the idea of "third places," since these are the kinds of spaces I try to create myself... However, in order to be able to contribute to the creation of these spaces, both architects *and* artists should be conscious of those issues; they should not claim innocence. So, if the third space has to be created or helped or protected, one has to be aware – *between* what spaces *is* the third space, what are the other spaces, and what kind of politics and ethics are behind them? Because some of those spaces are in fact directed, orchestrated as spaces of legitimization for certain action groups that have a profound impact on planning and architecture. The other important thing is to think of those who are not taken into account, who have no access to the circulation of power, no representation in planning. There is no symmetry, so sometimes you may want the third space, but you should concentrate a lot on those whose needs, feelings, and experiences are not normally translated into anything programmatic.

## Four

"I think that performing is about the creation of a construction, the removal of the ordinary self and the insertion of the metaphor. Whatever happens to you, you are in turn transmitting. You become a space, a space in which the public can project onto the body. In my performances, I become a kind of anti-self in order to create room for the public space."





**Wodiczko**: Performance artists are, of course, very close to the human body. In their bodies, they see a relationship to the environment and the presence of other people. In fact, one could consider creating architecture as performance in space; I can think of the early works of Bernard Tschumi, his *Bodily Movements*, or the early work of Diller + Scoffidio as good examples. However, those specializing in "building buildings" have distant relationships to the human body. They consider that part of their job is to provide a *shell* to control movements of bodies in space, to "protect people from wrong-doing," as Foucault would say. But when it comes to really paying attention to the singular being, one needs to pay attention to how the body speaks, to how people actually abuse the environment and its process in order to come to terms with their own place in it. In these terms, it is very difficult to link Abramovic's work with what is traditionally considered architecture.

**Ackermann**: There is a nice example of the relationship between architecture and the human body that comes to mind. Ironically, it is from medieval times, for I can't think of any from the 20th century. In early Romanesque Cistercian cloisters, the churches themselves were built as musical instruments; the whole space was designed to reflect the human voice in a way that enhanced the Gregorian chant. The church was spatially and visually beautiful, but its volumes were chosen in service of the oratorium. This technology in turn contributed to the beginnings of polyphonic chants; when sounds were uttered too quickly, they would mix. As the time for one note to go around was about 40 seconds, if you sang faster than that, notes would superpose and become harmonics. This is a nice example of a space that takes bodily parameters into its design. But it also goes deeper, for in those times, they were not using "disembodied" measuring instruments. The whole physical shape was about making visible certain "invisible" borders around the body using the body itself as a measuring tool.

**Wodiczko**: That is a fantastic example. One could also think of McLuhan's idea about how a fragile experience or dialogue with some *body* or *somebody* else in space and time could be inscribed into an architectural environment with the use of contemporary technology. Developing various techniques of memorization or delay, the present could be retrieved in response to movements and changing situations. Certain experiences can be inscribed or carved into the memory of architecture as a mixture of software and hardware that has nerves and brain and is responsive to senses, the kind of "interactive screens" Baudrillard has been talking about. If the walls were not only partitions but could become those "interactive screens" that also have memory of previous events and juxtapose the present with the past or transport things in the future, then we would have a very different life. Architecture would become a really responsible and responsive, communicative environment, and we wouldn't ask questions like,

"What is this medium? Is this art or architecture or building? What is this?" We wouldn't ask these questions; they would be inappropriate.

**Ackermann**: One of the main questions is how malleable or identity-based the environment should be. At first glance, an *ideal* environment seems to be the one that is responsive to one's mental demands. My claim is that it could easily turn into *hell*. It is like being with somebody who is constantly mirroring you, someone agreeing with you before you even ask for it. We usually prefer partners, artificial or not, who have a backbone, a "logic" of their own. We appreciate it if – now and then – they don't do exactly what we expect, if they surprise us. These questions become extremely important when we talk about qualities of "virtual" or "artificial" environments. At certain moments, you may need mirrors to reflect you, while at others you would rather have something that bounces a little bit. It is the same with people. Malleability or responsiveness alone are not guarantees for interesting conversation. I hear a lot of this talk among colleagues obsessed with designing so-called "user-friendly" design interfaces. I hate this term; it sounds like salesmen...

**Wodiczko**: Yes, "user-friendly," how boring... But we have to address the other issue, which is also becoming rather boring; the split between architecture as it is understood in institutions and the design of, say, wearable equipment. There is a gap here, and this is what worries me about the future. For if art, architecture, and instrumental media research don't start working together, we practically cannot start to explore these questions. All the areas that we have pointed out require a *different laboratory* than what we have right now.

**Ackermann**: Actually, one of the reasons I was excited to take part in this interview is that it provides an occasion, through your very well elaborated questions, for a little brainstorming about the kinds of laboratories we would want for ourselves. A great deal needs to be done; bringing together media study, architectural study, art, and social sciences but around *specific topics* that would almost constitute a new discipline.



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# A Short Chronicle of Beautification

Garyfallia Katsavounidou

-Cities also think they are work of the mind or of chance, but neither the one or the other is enough to keep their walls standing. You don't enjoy the seven or seventy-seven wonders of a city, but the reply it gives to your question.
-Or the question it puts to you, obliging you to reply.

Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*





## Thessaloniki, a city of one million inhabitants, stretches out on a ridge along the gulf of Thermaikos, its coastline facing the Aegean Sea.

This unique, uninterrupted twenty-three-kilometer waterfront is bounded westward by the port, an important connecting point between the east Mediterranean Sea and the Balkan countries. In urban terms, the harbor and its adjacent areas, accommodating mainly commercial activities, have historically been one of the most agile and idiosyncratic parts of the city center, as in the case of *Ladadika* ("Oil Market"), a small enclave north of the Customs House. One of the few neighborhoods to escape destruction in the 1917 fire, which destroyed the historical core of the city, Ladadika is located a few hundred meters from the water's edge. From the 1920s onwards – and in addition to wholesale trade – it began to accommodate some brothels and traditional coffee shops, which served not only the locals but also transient visitors of the harbor: a multinational male population of soldiers, merchants, and tourists. This urban landscape, home to a mixture of legitimate and "illegitimate" economic transactions, was practically unchanged through the early 1990s; it is actually the phenomenon of its transformation that has drawn general attention to the district and will be briefly addressed in this essay.

Until that time, however, the distinct character of the area, equally dissimilar to any traditional or modern neighborhood of the city, was maintained in its essence, despite the demolition of some buildings and their replacement with six- and seven-story hotels, which also housed prostitution. When as a young architecture student I visited the neighborhood for the first time in 1991, the area presented itself to me as an open question. Bustling and crowded during daytime, resembling more a traditional bazaar than a typical commercial district of a modern city, it was regarded by the communal conscience as an obscure neighborhood, almost a phantom area during the night, presumably invisible in the mental map of respectable citizens.

Because of its ambiguous character, the neighborhood attracted not only prostitutes, "protectors," and male clients, but also other visitors: artists, writers, poets, and musicians. Most of them on the margins of mainstream culture themselves, they experienced the area, especially the interior spaces of the brothels, "mystifying and forbidden," as a field of inspiration for their work. Thus, Ladadika and its "sinful" aura was represented and articulated in literary narratives, pictorial images, and song lyrics; to a certain extent, it was through these constructs that the district's reputation was sustained within and disseminated outside the city limits. However, the mythology of the libidinous, erotic urban space attributed to Ladadika, was as illusory and problematic as its "invisibility." In fact, during our research project, which started in 1991, both the public space of the district and the interiors of the brothels disclosed no traces of erotic signs or representational forms; on the contrary, and to our surprise, they were not dissimilar to, or discernable from, one's quotidian urban and architectural experiences.[1] In our discussions with the users, the supposedly "erotic" experience inside the enclosures was described as a mere commercial transaction. For example, in their professional jargon, prostitutes called the brothel "shop" (μαγαζι), while the Greek word used to describe a brothel means "house" (οικος or σπιτι). The subversion of pre-constructed assumptions and expectations about the brothels, both in terms of form and content, ended up as a complete revision of our initial research hypothesis. Before starting our field research, we supposed that we would find evidence of an "erotic" architectural typology; we soon realized, however, that the questions in our study were related to the operations taking place inside the buildings, instead of to the buildings themselves. The lack of representational signs in the physical aspect of the buildings and the district in general was intertwined and, in fact, conditioned by the multifaceted human interaction, actual and mythological, occurring in those spaces.



[1] V. Tentokali, G. Katsavounidou, P. Kourti, & G. Melissourgos, "The brothel as the space of erotic desire?" in *Semiotics around the World: Synthesis in Diversity: Proceedings of the Fifth Congress of the International Association for Semiotic Studies, Berkeley 1994*, ed. I. Rauch & G. F. Carr (Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1997), pp. 569-572.

## *the threshold of a brothel*

The survival of the district's genius loci was parallel and interrelated to the absence of historic preservation of its 19th century architectural fabric, an absence that did not exclude their unofficial maintenance by the tenants. Although Ladadika is circumscribed by postwar high rise office buildings that constitute the modern downtown district of the city, the traditional commercial buildings survived demolition and continued to house the traditional functions for which they were built in an almost unaltered way. In the early 1990s, the bad condition of the buildings – their decaying facades, the heterogeneity of signage, and the unadorned public spaces around them – was itself a sign that the district remained outside any municipal or state interest. The neglected status also conveyed that real estate prices were relatively low, especially in comparison to the neighboring downtown area, thus permitting the continuous use of both buildings and public spaces by their original users. In 1992, our data showed that both wholesale and retail trade, light industry, some offices, as well as a considerable number of brothels constituted Ladadika's uses.

As one should have predicted, though, "the decline of neighborhoods, rather than being corrected by gentrification, is its precondition."[2] A major transformation was initiated in 1989 with a subtle and, at that time, insignificant incident: the opening of an "alternative" brewery/coffee shop in the midst of the original, obscure uses. At first, it appealed to a specific audience, mostly consist-

[2] Rosalyn Deutsche, "Uneven Development: Public Art in New York City", *October*, no. 47, p. 27.





## *street scene*

ing of members of the so-called "avant-garde" community of the city. Nevertheless, the ambiguity of the site and its safely risqué ambience made the place intriguing enough to become quickly popular. Together with the general public, architects and city authorities gradually developed an interest in the district; official voices proclaimed an emergency to safeguard Ladadika's traditional buildings as monuments of 19th century architecture. These coincident gestures, both by night-dwellers and by architectural scholars, were the opening acts of what would very soon become a common public opinion. "Sinful" Ladadika called for attention; its hidden opportunities were finally brought to surface. The public opinion was largely influenced by numerous newspaper articles, interviews, and television and radio broadcasts, which transcended the city's borders and granted national fame to an up-to-then infamous area.

From 1993 to 1997, the city's authorities orchestrated a multi-scale effort for saving the historical envelope of Ladadika, stated in terms of public policy, urban intervention, and architectural design. This "urban renaissance"

began with the landscaping of small squares, the designing of urban furniture such as sheds and street lamps, and, during a later stage, the re-laying of the streets with cobblestone so as to look old (again). As one by one the original uses were eradicated, private developers, in cooperation with architects and decorators, refurbished the decaying buildings, repainted their facades, and redesigned their interiors so as to house the new commercial activities – namely, restaurants, music taverns, clubs, and bars, as well as art galleries and architects' studios. At the end of the process, Thessaloniki had reclaimed this historic district by transforming it into a predominantly entertainment-related zone.

## *Epilogue*

In a recent article on Times Square, entitled "From Sin City to Sign City,"[3] Joan Ockman offers a critical commentary on the redevelopment plan currently underway in the heart of New York City. In her revealing chronicle of the orchestration of this "conceptual makeover," Ockman pointedly stresses that the attempt to erase the "seedy, smutty, crime-ridden urban underbelly that was the area's more defining image for the last three decades" is a symptom of a pervasive cultural homogenization that is promoted, produced, and maintained by corporate capital. She also extends her arguments by projecting current transformations into the future. To the question of "how the locals will respond to the new-nostalgic vision of Times Square as zone of anarchic signage and clean bright fun," she proposes two alternative answers. In "what might be called the late-modern, left intellectual, tragic scenario," the eviction of the "sinful" original uses and users and the corporate-driven substitution of Times Square's authentic physical context with a "hyperreality of commercial messages" will not be well received by "real New Yorkers." In this pessimistic prophecy, Times Square will be transformed into a dull, unexciting area "for the benefit of tourists and visitors from the suburbs and outer boroughs." In contrast, in the second scenario, the exorbitant proliferation of consumerist signs will finally emancipate the citizens – and the whole world – from their manipulative influence; the ecstasy of "Times Square's frenzied carnival of excess communication" will enable us to "receive the images of commodity culture as allegory rather than solicitation."

The evident similarities between New York's metropolitan paradigm and its downscaled Greek version seem to reinforce the probability of Ockman's first hypothesis for the ultimate failure of Times Square's "Disney version of urban entertainment." For, in Ladadika, financial clouds have already started to darken the sky, as clients become fewer and fewer. Although the district is in the heart of the city, just next to the busy seaport, and by now not nearly as "inaccessible" as it used to be, "real Thessalonikians," acting upon Ockman's late-modern scenario, "won't be caught dead drinking beer in ersatz brew pubs."[4] While the locals, saturated by its nostalgia, do not go there anymore, Ladadika is increasingly identified as a tourist venue, attracting visitors and people from the surrounding towns and vil-

[3] Joan Ockman, "Introduction: From Sin City to Sign City," *A+U*, no. 344 (July 1999), pp. 6-10.

[4] As Ockman writes: "'Real New Yorkers' (here we construct our own mythic subject) are too savvy and have too many other places to go to take Times Square seriously as a 'destination' even if all subways do lead there." In Joan Ockman, Ibid., p. 8

lages. Since the brothels, following all other traditional uses, have moved elsewhere in the city, the image of "the Red Line of the city" does not seem genuine anymore, even to the occasional tourist.

The physical absence of the brothels has been replaced by a series of representations: abandoned buildings carefully restored; facades repainted; interiors remodeled to house new uses; names of coffee shops reminiscent of the "vile" past. The neighborhood has finally been cleansed of all profane elements, reborn, beautified, and offered to development. The campaign to save Ladadika has led to a triumph – but there is no one left to celebrate. Its previously invisible users sustained the visible signs of the district's character; their *absence* is now missed.

*This article is dedicated to my mentor, Vana Tentokali, to whom I am deeply grateful for her generous help and guidance. Vana is a professor at the Aristotelian University Department of Architecture in Thessaloniki, Greece.

## *literature*

*Later on, other prairies – once-upon-a-time rich and blooming – will be established as camps for the new agitated herds, suffering of mental sterility, sexual castration and other illnesses of the kind. Frigid entertainment-rooms and camouflaged seduction-houses will be built over the seven-sealed tombs of sin that used to smell human bodies and pure pleasure. But I will make an other Ladadika, I will open an other Canal d'Amour; to freshen up my feelings; to enliven my desires; to make friends like the good old times; to warm once again my love for Thessaloniki.*[5]
*-Thomas Korovinis*

[5] Θωμαις Κοροβινης, *Canal d'Amour: Αφηγημα για το ερωτικο περιθωριο της Θεσσαλονικης του '80* (Αθηνα: Εκδοσεις Αγρα, 1996), p. 58 (my translation).

housing people water
"visual listening" video series

# Listening to Las Peñas

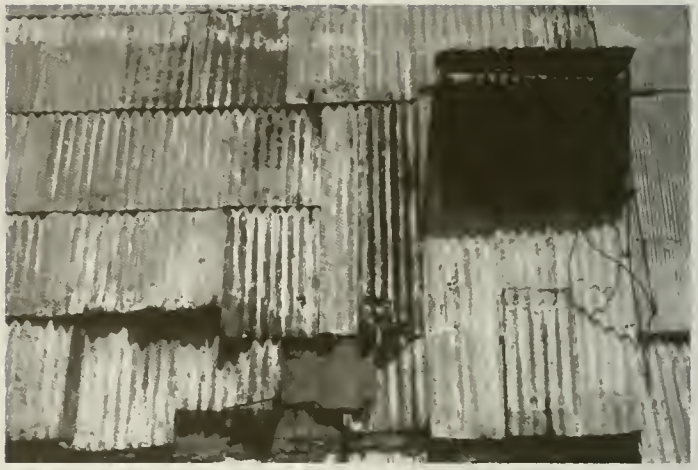


Kristin Little

In 1537, Indian chief Guaya killed his beautiful wife, Quil, and then drowned himself to escape capture by the invading Spaniards. This couple ironically became the namesakes of this coastal Ecuadorian city, Guayaquil. Since then, Guayaquil has survived several devastating fires, multi-million dollar cocaine scandals, and widespread corruption to become the largest city in Ecuador.

Within Guayaquil, a city of skyscrapers and haphazard concrete frame buildings laid out on a strict grid system, the neighborhood of Las Peñas is virtually the only place that seems to retain a distinct history. This long and narrow neighborhood is nestled between a steep hillside slope and the Guayas River, taking advantage of both the hillside backdrop and the stunning views of the water below. The original city center in 1537, Las Peñas is the product of over 460 years of development. This neighborhood has been destroyed and rebuilt several times as a result of the repeated destruction of the city by fire in the 17th and 19th centuries. It presently consists of six modern buildings and 30 ornately detailed wooden frame houses built most recently by unemployed ship builders in the late 1800s. Roughly 50 families live in its 11,742 square meters of floor space. The houses line a narrow cobblestone street, Numo Pompilio Llonas, that winds its way along the edge of the hill overlooking the river to the south.

Walking through this diverse middle- and low-income neighborhood, one finds pleasure in the human-scaled, one to two story wooden façades hugging either side of the narrow street. The chaos of handmade wooden signs entertain and advertise, while the second story balconies provide shelter. The curves in the street create pockets of space, denying a complete view of the street. On this journey, one will quickly realize that many of the residents are artists who have turned parts of their homes into galleries, lending an interesting character to the neighborhood. Visitors experience the place slowly as it unfolds before them. Lateral openings along the street treat the visitor to various glimpses of the river between and through the airy riverfront buildings, or of artists working in their studios among piles of paint tubes, cans full of brushes, and the occasional house cat. The quality of the architecture does not share that typically associated with a world heritage site; nonetheless, the value of the place comes from a richness of habitation and a liveliness of activity generated by this conglomeration and layering of buildings, people, and uses.







## the pressures

The discussion of Las Peñas raises issues relevant for other neighborhoods with similar socio-economic problems. It is located near an area of the city slated for substantial development and faces the impact of these momentous changes. It is currently experiencing pressure from a variety of sources and forces—as described in detail below. These pressures threaten to upset Las Peñas's social, economic, and physical resources if not addressed.

**Malecon 2000.** The Mayor, Pedro Febrés Cordero, has initiated a riverfront revitalization project adjacent to Las Peñas, called Malecon 2000. With 14,000 square meters of landfill and 95,000 square meters of new building area, this revitalization project includes plans for a luxury mall, museum, and gallery complex; market; and park area to be managed through a conglomerate of large businesses headquartered along the riverfront in Guayaquil's increasingly run-down central business district. Malecon 2000 is intended to raise the prestige of the city center and to promote Guayaquil as a tourist destination. This project is expected to revitalize the area, creating a favorable climate for redevelopment—a move that, combined with other new development planned for the area, will soon fill Las Peñas with investors seeking to profit from its ideal location and rich character.

**The new convention center.** In conjunction with the Malecon project, a private developer is building a convention center intended to attract large local and international functions. The convention center, if successful, will create a sudden and great need for accommodations, services, retail, and restaurants in the area.

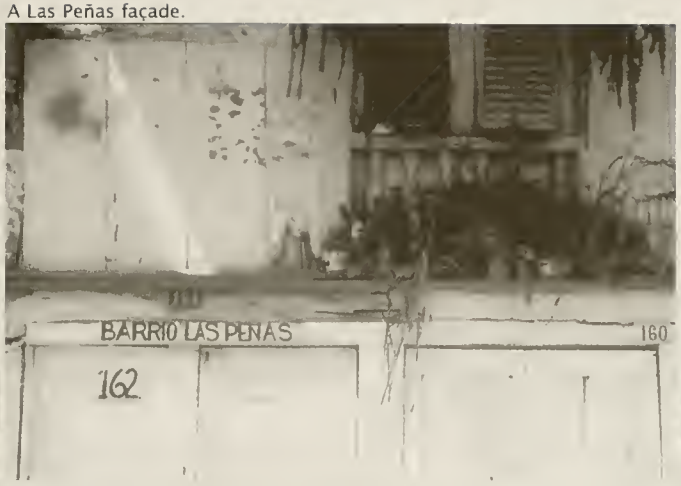
**The Santa Ana neighborhood.** To the northwest of Las Peñas is the 15-year-old land-takeover settlement of Santa Ana. Residents of Las Peñas feel threatened by this lower-income community. They are worried about crime and the overflow of the problems Santa Ana faces such as lack of employment opportunities, schools, healthcare facilities, retailers, and basic infrastructure. .

**Political pressure.** Mayor Febrés Cordero is particularly interested in the successful revitalization of this area for several reasons. He has a large stake in the success of the Malecon project as a factor in his reelection in the year 2000. Moreover, as former president of Ecuador, he has the connections and clout to execute the planned project. His political status is, therefore, critical to the success of the plan.

**Speculative pressure.** These forces surrounding and affecting Las Peñas—the new convention center, the Malecon 2000 project, Santa Ana's needs, the political climate, and the architectural and cultural potential of the neighborhood—combine to create a high level of energy and interest in the area. This gave birth to an even more powerful force: speculative pressure. The new development nearby has caused the potential value of Las Peñas to sharply increase, putting the neighborhood in a crucial and tenuous position. The gradient of change in the near future is steep, and there is little doubt that these pressures will lead to rapid physical and economic development. What remains unanswered is how that development will manifest itself in Las Peñas, and what effect it will have on the characteristics of the neighborhood that give it richness as the forces become stronger and stronger.

Numo Pompilio Llonas St.

A Las Peñas façade.




Las Peñas below, Sta. Ana above.

# the future

Change is inevitable and, in fact, desirable. However, if development is allowed to occur uninhibited, precedents suggests that Las Peñas will be developed by outside investors aiming to extract as much profit as possible. The buildings will be renovated, and high rises will fill the neighborhood, overpowering it with commercial and tourist-oriented uses. With the inevitable rise of property values, the current residents will most likely be unable to continue living in the neighborhood. The renters will be forced to move elsewhere and the owners will most likely sell out. This series of events is not uncommon and poses no evident threat to the neighborhood (if financial gain is the only measure). The landowners will profit, and the renters can surely find an apartment elsewhere. However, the situation has several less apparent yet serious consequences that call for careful consideration. To begin to uncover some of these points, a new approach to planning must be explored.

# the approach

Being a planner, architect, and educator, I look at things from several distinct angles. This background has led me to question the regular planning process. In a "normal" sequence of events, planners make several trips to the site and then hold meetings with government officials and sometimes community members. With this information, coupled with their knowledge and experience of other projects, they return to the office and prepare a project proposal and plan.

This project proposes a different mode of working toward the future of a neighborhood. It recognizes that prescribed plans and lists of design guidelines have failed to produce anticipated results and also that anticipated results are not necessarily the desired results of all concerned. My proposed approach purposefully lacks a solution. It assumes that the stakeholders have the most knowledge of the context and are, therefore, best equipped to design the plan. It describes a process of 1. listening, 2. research/analysis, 3. information sharing, and 4. collaborative planning. This process uses new methodologies, including techniques termed "visual listening" and "photo flagging." This information is then used to facilitate creative collaboration among all stakeholders, in order to create a dynamic framework for the transformation and growth of the Las Peñas neighborhood cooperatively.

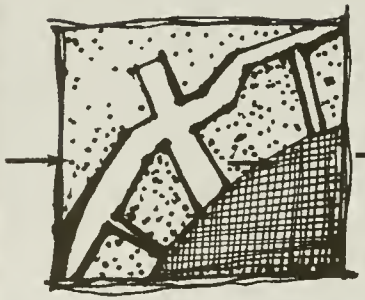
Underlying this approach to planning is the intent not to recreate a historical moment in time or create a set of design guidelines. Rather, it sets up a framework that allows for and encourages transformation. In this way, the neighborhood can evolve with the needs of its inhabitants. This is significant because the approach allows for change and development without stagnation or destruction of the existing fabric.

Architectural impressions recorded in a looking, learning, and teaching strip:

## connections to neighbors:

level 01: the area

Impression



Distillation

In practice this means:

Growth centered in Las Peñas could expand to the Santa Ana neighborhood, affording Santa Ana some of the profits, giving Las Peñas room to avoid overcrowding, and creating a stronger overall regional draw to the area. Creating opportunities for these connections to occur is an important consideration when formulating an approach.

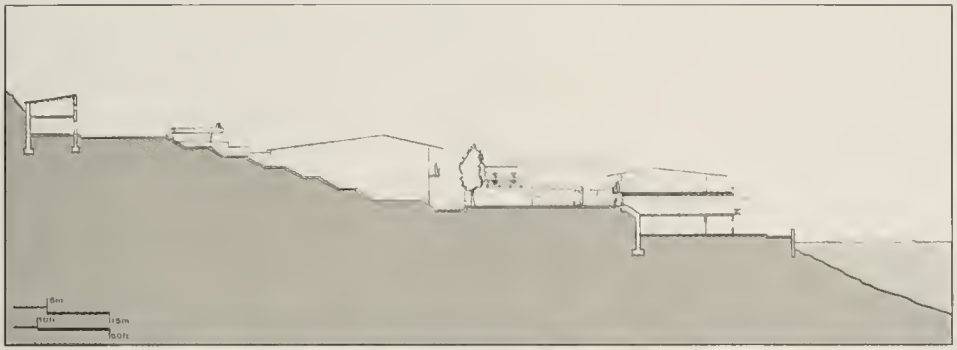
Video technique: "visual listening"

## listening

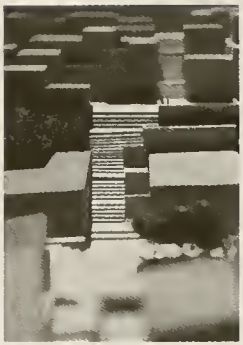
The proposed approach I have formulated begins by focusing first on listening to and observing the site using a number of different means. The first is called "visual listening." It is a video series I made focusing on issues salient to my eye. The three part series observes issues related to water, housing, and people. Another method of listening, photo flagging, involves handing the camera over to community members—giving out disposable cameras to community members with instructions to shoot what they see in their neighborhood that they like and don't like. The use of a new medium often makes people look more closely at things and gives many a voice that they normally don't have. It also allows for the option of silent participation.

These tools can then be used to facilitate a discussion with community members, planners, government officials, and developers. It provides them an opportunity to see what stands out to me and to others, as well as to help them define those things that are particularly important to them—cameras have only 24 exposures, and priorities must be made.

From an architectural perspective, I am concerned with the well-being of the built environment. To address these issues, I made several looking, learning, and teaching strips. I made them by taking photo observations and mental notes and distilling what I thought were the basic architectural phenomena that make Las Peñas a rich and interesting place. Again, as in the video series, observations are put into a format easily understood by all parties involved, so as to equip them with more information (this time architectural) to make their planning decisions.



Example in architectural terms



Example in built terms

This woman wants to convert her home into an inn.



## analysis/research

Given the information learned in this visual listening process, one can then begin to analyze the problems encountered/illustrated by researching possible courses of action. For instance, the woman in the photograph above wanted to take advantage of the influx of visitors expected as a result of the Malecon 2000 project and the new convention center by turning her house into lodging facilities. However, she knew little about the process or even how or where to begin. With this case/observation in mind, I researched various methods used elsewhere in order to encourage and enable entrepreneurship among the residents. I then described several similar approaches, noting what contribution was needed on the part of each of the stakeholders and, indeed, what was gained by each of them in the process.

## collaborative planning

Now, equipped with: 1. the knowledge of the priorities of the various stakeholders, 2. several policy principles with examples of how those have worked elsewhere, and 3. several design principles and how those can be manifested in practice, physically and from a policy standpoint, the stakeholders involved in the process can use this information to facilitate creative collaboration, interchange, and planning. This process provides a carefully designed set of tools, allowing the planners, residents, government officials, and developers of Guayaquil to devise the plan with more complete and intimate knowledge of the place than would have otherwise been possible.

# Recognizing Desire

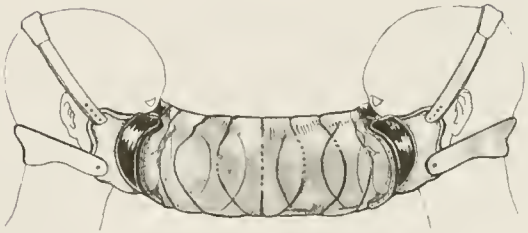
Jill Magid

If you were to approach me and ask me what my desire looked like, I would say that it looked like us, here, now. Does this mean that I can desire anyone? From the manner of your approach, I am aware that you recognize me, as a subject, with my own desire. In this position, I am able to recognize you, with your own desire, before me. A space encompassing the two of us opens up and there arises the possibility of a between-us.

*Desire is intrinsically related to recognition: "To be other and to move towards the other."*

- Michel de Certeau

## *The Kissmask*
with oral memory



In my own work, I have been constructing ways to see my desire. Having scarce physical evidence to see it through, I relegated myself to the Imaginary. At this point I had not yet validated the Imaginary as having a power of its own, as a place separate from the Real. I wanted to point to something real to show you my desire. So I dressed the space between us; I filled it with something physical so that I could be sure you would see what I saw and feel what I felt; I put it in between us to make a between-us; *I created the Kissmask.*

The mask isolates and unifies the space between our two mouths and noses. It highlights our eyes and forces visual contact. It is sensitive and responsive to every movement. The longer the mask is on, the more heated the air we share becomes. The tube contains a microphone which records the conversation, breath, and the kissing that may occur within it. The recording begins once the mask is put on and ends the moment it is removed.

The Kissmask, as I have come to understand it, is a tool for intimate experience and its visualization. As an object, it functions metaphorically as a representation of a space that evades objectification. As an experience, it allows oneself to be the other and to move toward the other. Through my use of the Kissmask with other users, I was able to validate the reality of the in-between space. Using the mask with other women, I began to see myself, through them, as a viable activator of that space.

# Recognizing Desire

*The Lap Cushion*

*For women, Desire is the capacity to develop an inside.*

- Jessica Benjamin

The little girl, whose sex is not visible, is constructed as lacking. What she actually lacks, though, is a symbolic representation of her sexuality. While, for a man, male subjectivity and male power are based on the ability to see himself perpetually represented, female libido remains invisible; it is too powerful to be represented. It threatens male subjectivity because of its hidden power.

To be a container is to be an actively open space. In sexual terms, men are considered to be the active "penetrators," while women are identified as the passive sites for penetration. Being an active container, though, means to escape this subject-to-object constructed subordination. A woman's container - as her own - is neither static nor passive. She does not have to play the masochist waiting for her ideal lover to penetrate and reveal her. She reveals herself. She develops an active container, an Inside. From here, she is secure enough in her own identity to challenge it. As she releases herself, she holds onto herself (as a container) and, in doing so, retains and fortifies her authorship.

*as a Public Performance*

The mapmaker persists: Where is the container? What is being contained? Is it underneath the skin? Is it in the mind, the heart, the imagination? Where are *you* in all this?

So, let's locate ourselves for him.

Let's show the absurdity of this gesture. As if that will fix it and make it safe; as if, once mapped, it is contained.

*The Lap Cushion project was founded with help from the MIT Council for the Arts

# Tactile Graphics and Strategies for Non-Visual Seeing

Steven Landau

**Fig. 1** Talking Kiosk installed in the Long Island Railroad's New York terminal facility in Penn Station.

For people who have difficulty seeing, acquiring spatial and pictorial information is a challenge. In our image-laden world, access to pictures has increasingly become a requirement for full participation in communal life. Touch Graphics was formed in 1996 as a for-profit company to perform research and to develop a number of graphical tools intended for a blind and visually impaired audience. These products and systems employ "tactile graphic" materials as their central feature, which are "looked at" with the user's fingertips, or by a combination of vision and touching. The presentation of spatial or pictorial information is made through the use of textured and raised-line media, thin PVC sheets that have been color printed and then vacuum-thermoformed with shallow three-dimensional relief images. Touch Graphics products include maps of bus routes, subway systems and interior transit facilities; free-standing public access "talking" kiosks (Fig. 1); and touchable computerized interfaces and interactive programming (Fig. 2). Our driving motivation has been to explore the ways that the user acquires information through tactile means: the normal rules of graphic design are largely inapplicable here. It is of particular interest, that in the course of our work, we have begun to identify a tactile aesthetic experience that may be comparable to what a sighted person feels when presented with satisfying visual materials. This overlooked component of our sensory equipment can deepen spatial awareness for members of this under-served segment of the population.

**Fig. 2** Talking Tactile Tablet

Originally developed as way-finding tools for complex urban transit systems, tactile graphic maps have evolved into a holistic system for presenting spatial information using non-visual means that has proved useful for a wide range of mapping applications. The primary challenges facing a tactile cartographer revolve around the requirement that dense information, suitable for presentation in a single print document, must be separated into several discrete "layers" that can be studied individually. In the example of the New York City Subway system, a single print map (Fig. 3) provides information about geographical context; about the routes and interconnections of the 26 subway lines; about important intermodal hubs at which rid-

ers can transfer to commuter rail or suburban buses; and the names of each of the subway stations, shown in sequence along each train route. Visual perception can discriminate each of the symbols shown on this map, and the sighted reader can mentally absorb information at several levels without becoming overwhelmed with data. *For the visually impaired traveler, this material must be presented in a sequential fashion, where each scalar view is digested from the general to the specific.* The goal for the tactile mapmaker is to allow the reader to accumulate information in a controlled way so as to construct a mental image of a complex system.

Our imaginary city known as Utopia is first shown in a *geographical overview* (Fig. 4), so as to orient the user and to provide a first look at the landmasses and disposition of the city *vis a vis* the surrounding watercourses. For some blind people, "seeing" this simple map becomes a profound life-event: for someone who has never been confronted with a graphic map, developing an accurate mental picture of a place is difficult. Many blind people construct these pictures based on their experience and anecdotal information. Upon using a map for the first time, these ideas are either confirmed or shattered. This is an essential first step in coming to grips with complex spatial configurations that must be mastered before the next more detailed graphic images are examined.

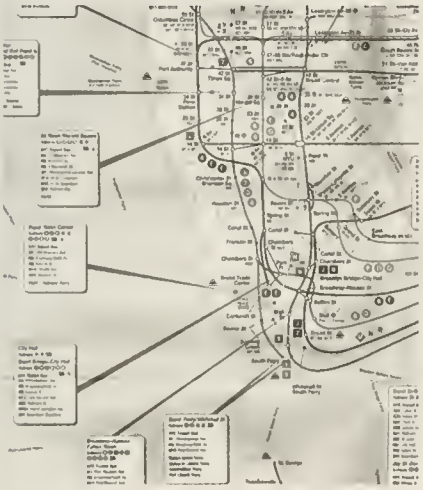


The next element in our sequence of map-types is the *system overview* (Fig. 5). Here, all of the various subway routes are shown together, in order to show the extent of the system, especially in reference to major landmarks, such as parks, the shoreline, and the city boundaries and also to locate key transportation nodes to commuter rail or suburban buses. Typically, this map would not be brought along on an excursion: rather, it provides a general view of the network, which can be studied at home during trip planning. When the user sets out, he or she will normally carry one or more *strip maps*, illustrating the specifics of the subway routes that will be navigated on-route to the destination. These compact booklets depict each station along a particular subway line in a

**Fig. 3** New York City Subway system map

**Fig. 4** Geographical Overview tactile map

**Fig. 5** System Overview tactile map



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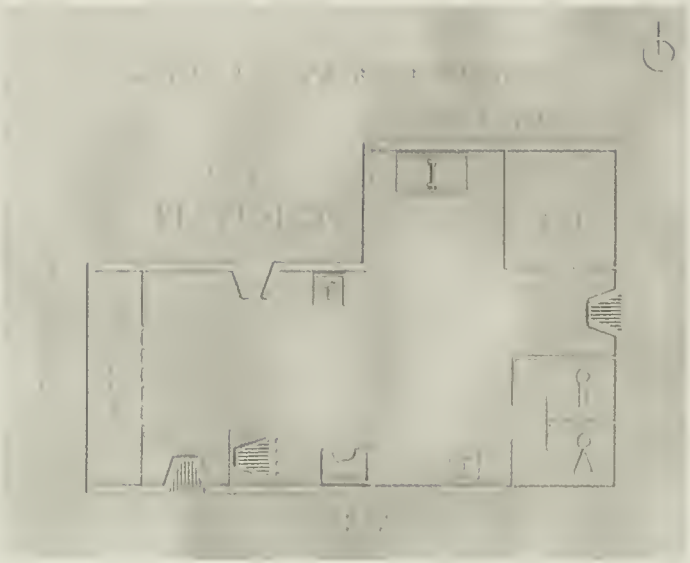


**Fig. 6** Transit Node Interior Sample

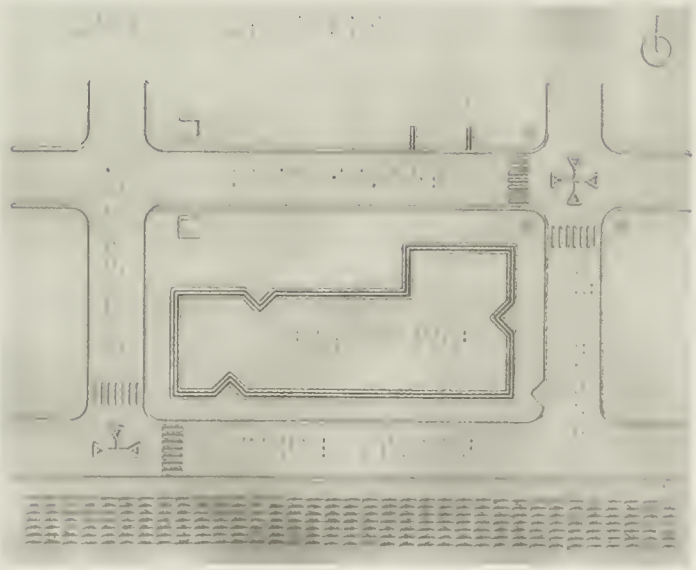


**Fig. 7** Transit Node Exterior Sample

linear fashion. Instead of providing a spatially accurate picture of the actual movement of the train through the city (such as in the system overview), strip maps show the temporal progression of the subway as it passes through each station. Each of the 3" x 6" pages of these maps shows three stops along a straight line of travel, and stops are represented by event-markers, like beads on a necklace. Not surprisingly, most sighted subway riders do exactly the same thing; when the visual connection to the above-ground world is severed, we all tend to count the number of stops (events) to our destination instead of trying to reckon the distance or direction of travel.

The final components of the progression from the most general to the most specific are, what are known in the parlance of professionals who train blind travelers, *mobility* maps. These show detailed views of important public places, such as long-distance bus and train stations, airports and ferry terminals. Mobility maps can be used to show both the interiors of buildings (Fig. 6) and their context within a neighborhood (Fig. 7). These documents illustrate (with scalar and directional accuracy) the physical realities of complicated environments. For the traveler, they provide valuable information regarding the layout of these facilities, including locations for building entrances, ticket and information counters, and departure platforms. They can also show vehicular traffic patterns that must be negotiated to reach the building itself.

Through the combination of the four map products discussed above, a trained tactile map reader can independently use public transportation to perform normal life tasks like getting to school, to the office, or for recreation. Beyond the primary requirement of separating out information into digestible packages, our experience in creating this system has led to the development of several other rules-of-thumb for producing images intended for the non-visual acquisition of spatial information, some of which are listed below:

1. In print maps, color-coding is used to help the user follow the route of a single train line amidst the visual cacophony of many competing markings: for example, on New York City's subway map, the number 1 train (and only that one) is always shown as a red line. In tactile cartography, contrasting "linetypes" are used (see Fig. 5, for example). The reader can easily follow each train's route, even when it intersects with several others, because it has a unique three-dimensional specification. It is quite easy to discriminate between a single line of closely spaced dots and one that is composed of a double series of long dashes. We have created a catalog of fourteen different linetypes for this purpose.

2. The use of symbols must be absolutely consistent. Our lexicon for transit maps contains about thirty different pointal symbols to call out a wide range of system features, from express train stations to public restrooms to traffic signals. For each symbol used, an identifying explanation must be included in the legend that is bound into the map booklet. However, referring to the legend is time consuming and breaks the user's concentration. Once a particular symbol has been learned, the user should be able to confidently conclude that when that symbol is encountered in the future, it will have the same meaning. This seems axiomatic; however, print cartographers often vary standardized symbols slightly depending on map clutter or context. This practice should be discouraged in tactile mapping. Prior to the wide use of Computer Aided Design (CAD) and Computer Aided Manufacturing (CAM), most tactile products were "home-made" and developing rigid standards was unrealistic. However, with computers, libraries of symbols, linetypes, fonts and textures can be widely disseminated for use by anyone familiar with computer drafting, and willing to learn some basic principles. It is reasonable to expect that an internationally recognized symbol-set may be soon adopted, so that the blind or visually impaired transit rider from Newark might move to Tacoma (or to Rome) and expect to find immediately useful tactile maps. Touch Graphics and Baruch College CCVIP have collaborated to create ACTION Maps software, which includes libraries of field-tested standardized symbols, and utilities for generating the map products.[1]

3. Within a single document, the total number of tactile symbols used should be limited to no more than fifteen. Since the reader must be expected to remember the meanings of these symbols, it is unrealistic to employ too large a vocabulary on one map. When more than fifteen are used, a single-page legend is not possible, and too much time and energy must be devoted to the identification of unknown symbols.

4. Along the same lines, the design of symbols must be as intuitively understood as possible, also as a means of reducing the reader's need to consult the legend. For example, our indication of a flight of stairs is a set of three rectangular platforms, each in progressively higher relief. This literal stepping acts as a much more potent mnemonic device than the series of parallel lines indicating stairs familiar to print map readers. Moreover, a print convention converted directly into tactile format might be misinterpreted by someone who has never seen it: a directional arrow drawn as a pair of short converging lines might look to a tactile

[1] ACTION Maps software was created under a grant from Project Action/National Easter Seal Foundation in 1998. It is made available free of charge to transit agencies around the country.

reader as if it indicates precisely the opposite direction from that intended, starting from the point of convergence and moving off in the direction of the two flared-out lines.

*In conclusion*

We are interested in discovering ways in which the tactile viewing experience can be made more pleasurable; just as in print media, work that is particularly aesthetic and enjoyable is focused on and digested more thoroughly as compared to material that has been designed without considering graphic quality. The characteristics of an aesthetic tactile experience, however, have been shown to be quite different from the print equivalent.





As technology has advanced, the means of creating and distributing print materials has become much cheaper. Graphic art techniques have adapted to this pace, and the end result may be that our ability to look carefully and absorbently may be deteriorating. These days, we are presented with great quantities of visual images that we feel compelled to consume in an increasingly scanned and necessarily cursory manner. The highest value is put on designs that attract our attention amidst an expanding universe of competing and distracting voices; less care is devoted to richness of content and thoughtfulness of layout after the original impact has been made. Tactile graphics must pursue an *alternate strategy*, since it is almost impossible to make an instant impact: the reader using his or her fingertips can only examine one region or point at a time, slowly accumulating fragments to construct a mental model of the complete picture. Furthermore, there is no tactile equivalent to the common practices of web surfing, remote control clicking or magazine page flipping. The tactile reader must spend at least a few minutes looking before the whole image or design scheme begins to emerge. Tactile images that are organized to allow for the identification of discreet bits of content that is presented in a rational hierarchy usually offer the most satisfying and aesthetic experiences. The necessarily slow and deliberate pace of tactile looking might even be thought of as an antidote to the superficial characteristics of a contemporary media culture that offers instant gratification but does not require much of a commitment on the part of the viewer.

*This work has been done in partnership, and is based on ten years of earlier research, by Computer Center for Visually Impaired People, Baruch College, City University of New York

# Garbage on the Wharf

Greg Russell

1 transfer station exterior
2 tipping floor
3 tipping hole
4 transfer truck area

Waste infrastructure can be loosely divided into two groups: one dealing with wastewater (effluent from a toilet) and the other dealing with solid wastes (items put in a garbage can). Among the solid waste infrastructure are garbage collection trucks, transfer stations, incinerators and landfills. Transfer stations are places where household or commercial waste is transferred from garbage collection or personal vehicles to larger vehicles (5x the capacity of collection vehicles) for transport to the sanitary landfill. Landfills although cheap are not easy to build; no one wants to live or work too close to one with the industrial traffic, smell and eyesore that they cause. Consequently, landfills are located on the periphery of towns, on undeveloped or undesirable lands. For landfills that are located far from the source of the waste it makes more financial sense to transfer the load of the collection vehicles to a transfer vehicle for the trip to the landfill. Basically, the farther the landfill from the source of the waste, the more likely that there is a transfer station as part of the waste infrastructure.

In contemporary societies much energy and complexity is expended to render our waste invisible. Very few people really know where their garbage or sewage actually is treated/landfilled; hence the moniker 'out-of-sight, out-of-mind' industry. Trash engineers have done too good a job. "By the 1970s, most Americans knew less about basic city services than they ever had, since in many cities the engineers had done such a good job controlling floods, delivering water, and removing waste that citizens could take these services for granted."[1] Not being confronted with or living in proximity to our waste renders most people oblivious to the consequences of their wastefulness. However, for those who live near a waste infrastructure site, obliviousness is not an option. Since most people who can afford not to live close to a waste site do not, a social stigma befalls those who actually do. To achieve real change in American's attitude toward waste and wasting, the attitude toward the design of the waste infrastructure must change. The problem then, is complex. First, how to bring people in closer connection to their own waste without stigmatizing them, thus enabling the siting of waste infrastructure in all areas of a municipality and how to design the actual waste infrastructure so that it is a pleasant neighbor to all. The goals of these questions is to remove the stigma associated with wasting and waste infrastructure so that we might see the act of wasting as a valuable and integral part of life, as important as working and resting.

Since 1960 Americans have doubled the tonnage of municipal garbage generated each year and according to the EPA, nearly half of the nation's six thousand municipal landfills were capped by the early 1990s and thousands more will close by the end of the decade.

To eliminate the stigma of waste treatment and removal that is pervasive in contemporary society, the central elements of this process should be visible and prominently located in the city. This project proposes siting a solid waste transfer station in combination with a public park in the center of the city of Boston. The association of another program, in this case a park, forces the waste infrastructure to be made public. I treated the design of the transfer station/public park as an opportunity to showcase the workings of the waste industry while still providing the amenities of a park. Through the infusing of the "positive" elements of park design, the stigma associated with waste can be overcome. The overlap of processes of the transfer station with activities in the park will encourage dialogue about our habits of wasting and the vital role that waste infrastructure plays in a city, as vital as urban parks. By defining occupiable places within the infrastructure, the waste process is no longer limited by given boundaries but becomes an urban and architectural form generator.

[1] Robert Bruegmann, **Infrastructure Reconsidered**, p. 10.

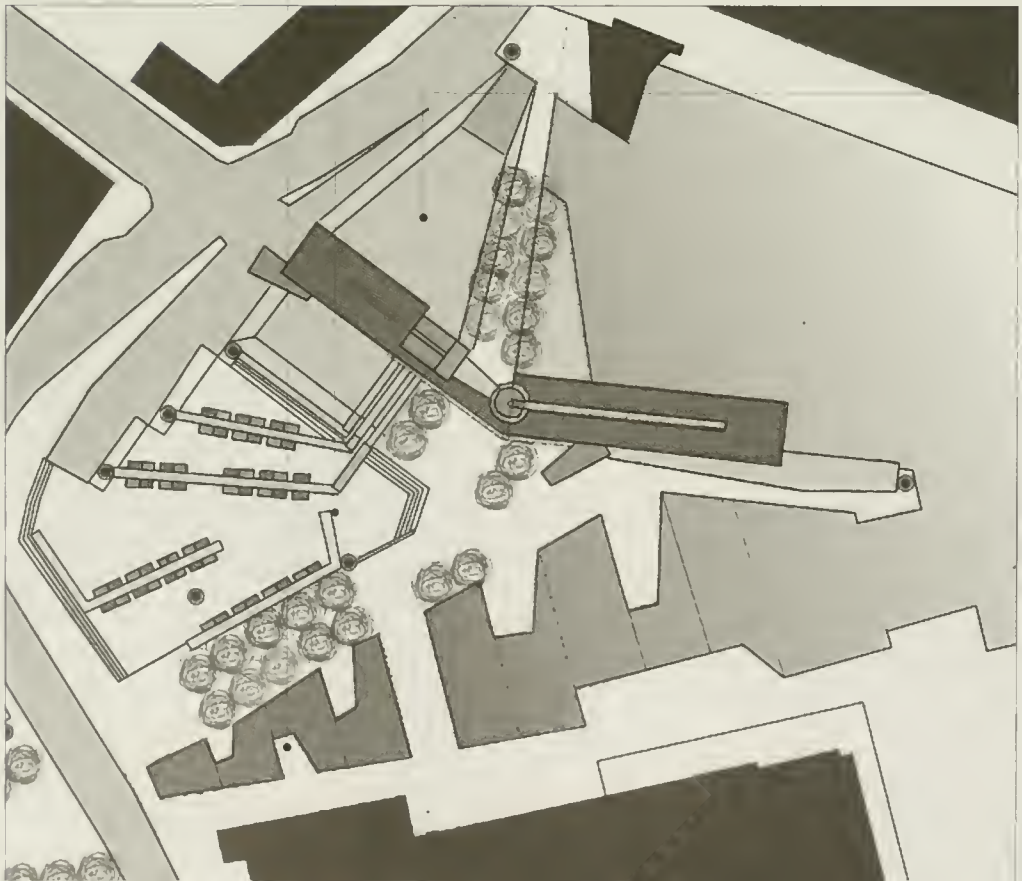
**water channel**

The approach toward the urban design of the site was that for the park and the transfer station to coexist, the distinct programs and experiences of the two dissimilar uses needed to overlap as much as possible. I designated three overall areas of overlap (the 'water channel', 'market' and 'open field') between the intended public's use of the park and the elements of the waste infrastructure. The transfer station itself occupies and orders all three areas of the park. The design of the transfer station incorporates standard equipment used at a conventional transfer station but the equipment is modified in form and use in order to by experienced by the public. Although the design of the structure is linked to and emerges from the processes and path by which the garbage moves, the attitude towards the design was that every decision should reflect bringing the waste into the public realm, *making the invisible visible.*





**market**



**open field**

Creating a scenic space for sitting by the waterside, this area of the park also provides access to and a waiting place for the water taxis. The vegetation sustained in the tidal ponds filters the water as it flows back to the harbor.

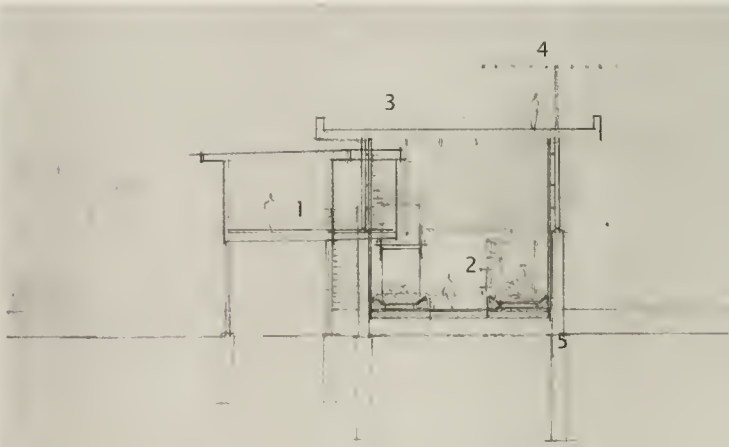
Through the juxtaposition of goods brought in for sale at the market with those items recovered on-site for reuse, the park demonstrates the multiple lifespans of products and materials.

The open green lawn around the station offers space for activities coexisting with the movement and removal of garbage.

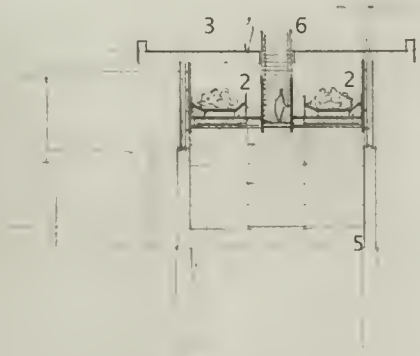
**Sections**
This and the following four sections reveal the physical expression of the process of transferring garbage at the site. The sections expose and celebrate the movement of the garbage.

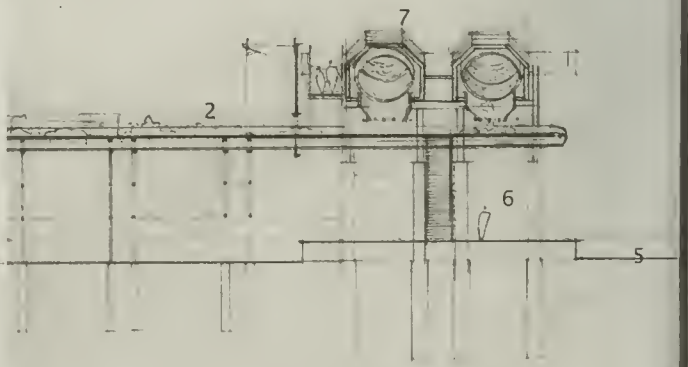
Numbers on the drawings are keyed to the terms at right.

1 *adminstration area*
2 *conveyor belts*
3 *roof terrace*
4 *scrim*
5 *sunken field*
6 *pedestrian stair*
7 *trommel screen*
8 *hammermill*
9 *viewing area*
10 *seating for water taxi*
11 *trash barge*
12 *water channel*

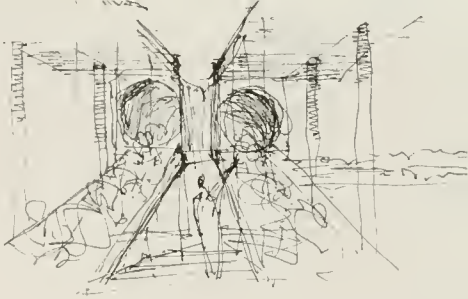


From the tipping floor, the trash travels through a bag breaking apparatus and is sprayed with a fragrance and washing solution to combat the usual smell. The conveyor belt slopes up over the open field to a trommel screen. The glass clad conveyor belt area allows park visitors to view the process from the market or grassy areas. In the trommel screen the trash travels through successive rotating drums and is sorted according to size. Trash that is extracted by the trommel

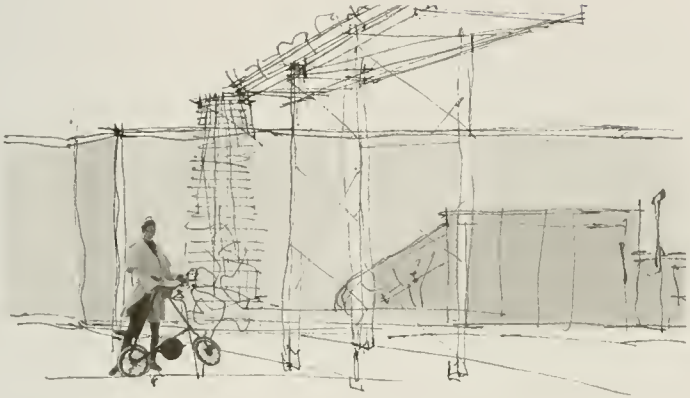


Greg Russell



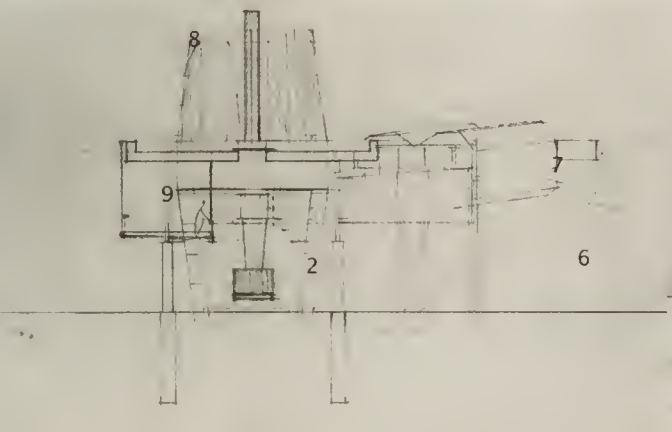


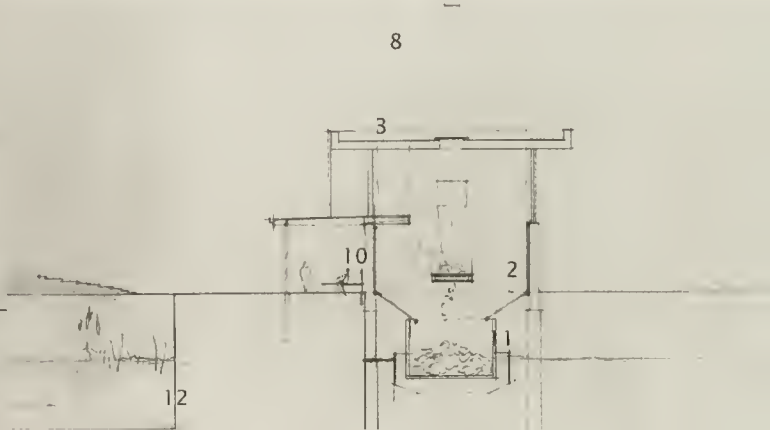


The shame and fear of waste have made its facilities invisible, inaccessible, uncontrollable, and unsafe. Instead of distancing ourselves from waste, design can bring people closer to waste operations and help foster creative solutions to problems intrinsic to waste disposal, issues common to all people.

Mira Engler, *Waste Landscapes*

emerges from the machine onto conveyor belts leading to other machines located above the market for final sorting for recyclables. Trash that is too big to fall through the trommel's holes travels to the hammermill which reduces the size of the remaining garbage. From here it moves along another conveyor belt falling into the transfer barge. Once filled, this barge is pulled out to a harbor island and its contents dumped in the landfill.



# HYBRID SAUNA

Pia Lindman

Lindman Family Sauna in Finland

A Finnish proverb says that the sauna is the most democratic space in the world. Here, we dismantle our vestments of social status and relax in a distinct social space where everyone shares the same basic needs of comfort and the refreshment of body and soul. This is the ideal condition of the Finnish sauna.

In my native country, Finland, everyone bathes naked in saunas together with their families, relatives, friends, and even strangers. Usually both sexes mix together without a second thought. My understanding and experience of bathing in a public sauna, being a very significant part of my cultural identity, is a very different one than in most Western cultures inflicted by Christian Puritanism. The strangeness of New England saunas in the USA has been my most acute experience of cultural displacement and has thus inspired this project.

In puritan cultures, the proximity of naked bodies is not tolerated. Due to taboos related to homosexuality, proximity of naked bodies of the same sex is especially precarious. Therefore, in women-only health clubs in New England, silence and

paranoia dominate the spaces. Worse yet, neither the spaces nor the bathing practices are given an architecture that would enhance sociability, but one that further isolate bathers from each other. And social interaction is the core ingredient in sauna culture.

In response to my alienation in puritan saunas I have designed a sauna that negotiates preconceived notions of bathing practices, of corporeality, nudity, morality, intimacy, and public space. I have named my sauna Hybrid Sauna, reflecting the hybridity of the saunas I have visited and also referring to the transformative power of a sauna ritual. This traveling Hybrid Sauna will be offering sauna baths in different locations, cities, and countries, to anyone who is curious enough to come in and bathe. All the various bathers from various cultures will bring into the sauna their own projections and cultural understanding, so that each sauna experience is a further hybrid of the sauna practice I have designed. Each bather invents his or her own sauna ritual, social rules, and conditions, departing from my initial instructions, which are there to facilitate the variety and multiplicity of projections. If there is anything left of the ideal



*Setting the Sauna Up for the Day*

**The velvet curtain** cutting through the sauna meticulously followed the variations of heights and forms of the structure, always carefully covering the surfaces. When the curtain had to make its way across the stairs, the bottom design of the curtain notched in a square angle for each step. The angled forms of the curtain were maintained by a heavy chain, sewn into the bottom of the fabric. The chain also weighed the fabric down so that it always hung touching the floor. When a bather touched and moved the curtain, it would offer a mild resistance. It was larger than the space it filled, so that each movement would remain as a trace in it, because the curtain would fall back into place and shape only partially. In the front of the sauna, the curtain would extend to the end of the iron pipe, covering it fully. Thus, the curtain also entered and interfered with the space immediately outside the entrance. This was the space where three benches and a large receptionist's counter were arranged to form a waiting lounge under the branches of surrounding trees. In this space, bathers would come and sit on the benches to cool off and interact with other people, who were either waiting for their turn or just socializing. The curtain cut through half of this lounge, so that people sitting on opposite benches had to move the curtain in order to see each other. Thus, the presence and interception of the curtain was stated from the very beginning of the sauna ritual and manifested its imposition even for those who did

Finnish sauna, it is the physical process and transformation through relaxation in the heat, that opens passages to new cultural and social processes, that the bathers create through interaction with each other.

The interior space of Hybrid Sauna is divided into three successive areas: the entrance space, dressing room and the hot room. These are separated by hanging screens, made of the same white fabric as the walls: two 60 cm-wide screens on each side of the door; one 120 cm-wide screen in the middle separating the entrance space from the dressing room; and an insulating wall between the dressing room and the hot room, consisting of flap-doors on top of stairs, that lead to the platform inside the hot room. The white fabric walls of Hybrid Sauna allow enough light to travel through them, so that a passer-by may cast a shadow on them. With the shadows, sounds and smells that transmit from the outside, the bathers inside are very aware of the minimal membrane that separates their naked bodies from the teeming public space outside. At the same time, the bathers share the intimacy of the sauna with a stranger whom they have never seen. There are no intellectual shortcuts to understanding this sauna performance/ritual. It has to be bathed. The liminal space of the sauna allows people to create new social norms for themselves during the ritual and to find new ways to connect with strangers.

As the attendant, I wear a white uniform with the phonetic sign of the word "sauna" embroidered on it. The uniform and label give the bathers an impression of professionality and authority, and that helps the bathers to prepare themselves mentally for the ritual. Prior to the bathing, I give each bather a walk-through of the sauna, during which I explain how it works. I explain the use of the water for steam, how to open the air-vent, etc. I also ensure the mental and physical comfort of the bathers.

Bathers coming out of the sauna, steaming and relaxed, cool off on benches outside and interact amongst themselves (often meeting the person with whom they bathed for the first time visually), with me, and other people. As "hot bodies" they are dynamic insertions into public space, expressing corporeal discourses of openness, pleasure, nakedness, honesty, and intimacy. Physically, as an intense backdrop to their glowing bodies, and symbolically, as a projection of puritan morality, the crimson curtain imposes a quality of spectacle onto these bathers in public space. This imposition can be utilized in a subversive way. In May 1999 at MIT, sitting on the benches outside, wrapped in his towel and gesturing in a wide circle with his arms, one bather exclaimed: "It is not us who are the spectacle, they are!"

Hybrid Sauna is a group performance in which the bathers and the sauna attendant stir the public discourse examining its premises of nudity and social structures. This performance highlights the discrepancy between puritan morality and corporeality in public space. The bathers sitting on the benches outside the sauna make visible the boundary between public space and the space of the sauna. Because of an altered state of mind and body induced by the liminality of the sauna, the bathers push the boundary by merely being there.

not bathe. From outside the sauna, you could see the lush red stem of the curtain recede into the depths of the sauna. The curtain represented the cultural imposition of New England prudence onto my ideal sauna. Promiscuity, sinful women, and prostitution are associated in most Western cultures with the color of crimson and the lush quality of velvet. Likewise, crimson velvet is a very common fabric used for theater curtains and speaks of spectacle, the circus, and role-plays. Some bathers thought of the confessional in the Catholic Church when encountering the curtain. All these associations formally, as well as culturally and symbolically, are foreign to an ideal Finnish sauna. However, the curtain was an integral part of my Hybrid New England/Finnish Sauna, in expressing precisely the hybridity of it.

Pia Lindman

*Warren Sack writes about his sauna experience*

I didn't intend to go into the sauna. I had to get back to my computer programming as soon as possible. But, after sitting for a while on the bench in the genial company of friends, acquaintances, and passers-by, I entered the tent with a birch bucket of water and a ladle, took my clothes off in the dressing room, and crawled into the sauna space itself.

Everything smells like fresh cut wood, and the heat makes the inside of your nose crackle when you close the door. As the water from the birch ladle hits the hot rocks in the brazier, it explodes and infuses the air with an intense humid heat. I lie on the pine flooring of the sauna to escape some of the extreme temperature, but the heat saturates one's body and the sweat begins to pour off in waves. I am already dizzy from my workout, but the heat makes me delirious. Time slows to a standstill. I can no longer hear the traffic on Massachusetts Avenue. I may as well be back in Norway in the sauna of Petter and Alvhild's cabin after a long ski tour in the woods. I throw some more water on the rocks and the temperature rises again. Now my internal prattle unclicks from the numerics of MIT and switches languages: "Hvor er jeg?" This is smooth space-time. This is why Deleuze and Guattari quote Carlos Casteneda. This is "stopping the world." I think I pass out, but I know that I didn't. From seemingly far away, Pia's voice can be heard: "Are you ready for a bucket of water?" Hmm. A bucket of water? I already have a bucket of water in the sauna with me. Perhaps she means something else, and so my curiosity leads me out of the sauna back to the front of the tent where everyone is still chatting.

Pia fills a large bucket full of ice cold water and asks if I want it poured over me: a question worthy of Masoch. I remember saying "yes" and the first sharp stab of cold water on my head as Pia began to pour the bucket over me. Everyone else on the benches watches to see if I will scream. I don't. The water overwhelms my nervous system. My neural network stops any remaining McCulloch-Pitts-like, binary logic operations still in process and proceeds to chaotic overload as the trickle out of the bucket turns into a torrent and I swim to the other side of shock. When I emerge from the downpour, I am grinning, and the small circle of participant-observers greets me with a wave of laughter.

# Signifying Nothing

Kevin Fellingham

This article seeks to ground itself in two literal understandings of the invisible, that is, as something, which is simply not there, or as something which has been hidden. It works out from the intuitive response to the *human body* as a commonplace object with which we are all intimately familiar, and of which we commonly expected a state of complete presence to be normal. The body is of course also an object to which strategies of covering and exposure are applied, in a highly differentiated set of systems across times and cultures.

## *That Which Is Not There*

A discomforting thought. I had sufficient elbow room to begin writing this on a Greyhound bus only because the young woman seated next to me had no arm from above the elbow, or at least, from above where her elbow should have been. That which is not there grasps, uninvited, our attention.

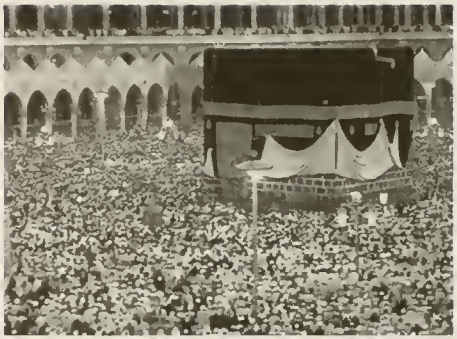
*To one side, but not to the other.*

Another story about a chair and a missing arm. There is a chair, designed by Lutyens that has but one arm. One cannot sit in this chair without assuming a certain pose, legs crossed, left hand resting, fingers curled, on one's right thigh, right hand, raised to the chin, perhaps framing one's mouth, holding the others' attention to one's face, one's conversation. It is difficult for anyone at all comfortable within his or her own skin not to assume that pose, or the demeanor which that pose accompanies. If one is not comfortable, the only choice is to sit bolt upright, hands together on one's lap, perhaps fidgeting the one with the other. If one is not comfortable, one is obliged to display that discomfort. That which not there can make its absence strongly felt.

"We deliberately left out one armrest to give more ease to the body. You can comfortably lean over to one side or turn around when sitting on this chair."
–Eileen Gray

## Haram

The tradition of women being veiled in public is an ancient one, older than the Muslim faith with which it is in many minds identified. It forms a continuum with the practice of assigning to women a separate, screened place within the home. The practice takes a variety of forms, from the curtaining off of a part of the Bedouin tent, to the elaborate Harems of the Ottoman Court. It is in the male dominated world of the Middle East that veiling has been most strictly enforced, and it is said that it was from Persia that the custom was exported to India, where certain Hindus adopted the practice, and gave to it the name of *purdah*. The word itself is Hindi for screen, or veil. Be the veil a sheet of silk or a wall of stone, the principle is much the same. That which is desired is hidden from view; desire becomes the currency of power.



MEKKAH, Saudi Arabia (AFP) -- Mekkah's governor will begin the ritual washing of the holy Kaaba monument on Thursday prior to the start of the annual Muslim pilgrimage next week, the official SPA news agency said. Prince Majed ibn Abdel Aziz and several other royal princes will lead the washing of the giant cubic stone with water from the Zamzam spring near the Kaaba mixed with rose water.



The Ka'bah in Mecca is the most sacred shrine in Islam, the locus towards which Muslims throughout the world bow in prayer. It is a small stone paralleliped, possessed of three internal columns that support its flat roof. The precinct in which the Ka'bah stands is known as the *Haram*, a word originally signifying a forbidden place, the same root as the place forbidden to men in the home. In this instance those forbidden entry are those not of the faith.

For most of the year, the Ka'bah is cloaked in heavy black silk brocade. The covering, the Kiswah is replaced every year at the time of pilgrimage. For a brief period, after being ritually washed in the waters of Zamzam, it is temporarily "replaced with a white cloth that corresponds to the white ceremonial robes of the pilgrims and signifies entrance into a sacred state (ihram)." The Ka'bah is empty, for it is the house of God, built on the foundations of the house built for God by Abraham and Ishmael. It is empty also because the idols, which later defiled it, were removed by the prophet. Adam too, had built an empty house for God, a house to be circumambulated, not to be entered.

It has a golden door but the door is raised above the ground, its threshold as high as outstretched hands can reach. The Hajjis walk seven times around the building, touching the Black stone, or just pointing at it, given the sheer weight of numbers. Symbolic behaviour is susceptible to change in the face of overwhelming realities. The Ka'bah is completely covered in its black robe, but the fabric is cut in such a way as to reveal the embroidered veil over the golden door, and is sewn so as to let the Black stone in its silver cowl to show through, to be visible, tangible.

## Michelangelo

The sixth day before his death, Michelangelo spent standing in front of the unfinished Roman Pieta, a work begun some fourteen years before. At some point in those intervening years, he had cut from its shoulder the right arm of Christ. The arm remains suspended in the space between itself and the torso, a space opened up through the compaction of the body of the dead man into that of his mother. The two bodies are fused into a space too small for them to remain separate objects; the head of the dead man merges with the shoulder of the woman, the new right arm is pulled tight into the mass of the couple in the manner of a high relief. The space between these two arms is charged with tension, between rough and smooth, finished and unfinished, chosen and rejected. The figures merge into a single columnar mass, rather than slumping into death. The dead figure seems to bear up that of the living, an impossibility which echoes the impossibility of occupying the same space as the other, the impossibility of the desire to ever be fully within a body of stone without being dead, with being made of stone rather than of flesh. The severed arm, with its finish like skin, rather than the chiselled stone of the figures in its amputation, opens up, or records the space where the independent body would have been, if it were not for the desire to become one with the other.

## *Fullness*

In 1994, the British sculptor, Rachel Whiteread painstakingly filled the interior of a house in East End of London with concrete. The envelope of the building was then stripped away, leaving a house in negative, a house in which the space normally opened to inhabitation was made visible, made concrete. It is perhaps not so much the specific materiality of this work in which its ultimate power resides, but in the signs of lives once lived in the space which that material filled, the negative impressions of fireplaces, picture rails, skirtings, circumstantial additions. The presence of living bodies is at once implied and made impossible. Did people once live lives, empty or full, in those little cubes which go to make up the whole, each space much like the other, one window, one fireplace, and we imagine, one door? The fact of the work having been cast is significant, in that it both signifies – and literally is – the inversion of the house into a work of art. Attendant on that formal inversion is a perversion of purpose of extreme power. In making the invisible visible, the void solid, it forces us to be outside the house to look upon the private surface, the skin of the space, bearing the imprints of the garments which held it in its place.

**Edith Ackermann** is a developmental psychologist; she investigates collaborative learning, constructive play, and creative work/design in technology-mediated environments. She is currently Professor of Developmental Psychology at the University of Aix-Marseille, France, and Visiting Professor in the Design Technology Group at the MIT School of Architecture.

**Stanford Anderson** was educated in architecture at the universities of Minnesota and California, and holds a PhD in History of Art from Columbia University. He is Professor of History and Architecture and Head of the MIT Department of Architecture. His research and writing concern architectural theory, early modern architecture in northern Europe, American architecture and urbanism, and epistemology and historiography. His book *Peter Behrens: A New Architecture for the Twentieth Century* will appear shortly from The MIT Press.

**Kevin Fellingham** is an architect and urbanist. He divides his time between both theory and practice, in London and South Africa. He holds degrees from MIT and the University of Witwatersrand.



**Diane Ghirardo** received her PhD from Stanford University, and has taught at Stanford, Texas A&M, SCI-Arc, MIT, and USC. Her books include *Building New Communities, Mark Mack, Architecture After Modernism*, and *Out of Site*. Her current research is on women and space in Renaissance Italy.

**Alfredo Jaar** was born in Santiago, Chile, in 1956 and trained there as an architect and filmmaker. Since moving to New York City in 1982, Jaar has emerged as one of the most prominent and controversial artists on the international scene. He has exhibited in important one-person and group exhibitions throughout the world that include Documenta and Bienalles in Sidney, Venice, Paris, Johannesburg, Sao Paolo, and Istanbul, as well as many of the world's most prestigious museums.

**Mark Jarzombek** received his architectural degree from the ETH in Zurich in 1980 and his doctorate in the History of Architecture from MIT in 1985. He has written widely on a variety of subjects from the Renaissance to the modern. He is currently a professor in the History Theory Criticism Section at MIT.

**Garyfallia Katsavounidou** is an architect; she received her Diploma from the Aristotelian University of Thessaloniki, Greece in 1996. She is currently a graduate student at the MIT Department of Architecture.

**Zissis Kotionis** is an architect practicing in Athens, Greece. He is a professor of architectural design at the University of Patras. He has recently published the book *The Question of Origins in the Work of D. Pikionis*. Ready to be published in Greece is his book *(His)Stories of Architecture*.

**Steven Landau** is Founder and President of Touch Graphics in Brooklyn, New York. He is a licensed architect and teaches at New Jersey Institute of Technology.

**Liane Lefaivre** is a researcher at the Technical University in Delft, The Netherlands. Her recent books include: *Leon Battista Alberti's Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (MIT Press), and, with A. Tzonis, *Architecture in North America since 1960*," (Bullfinch) and *Aldo Van Eyck, Humanist Rebel* (010).

**Pia Lindman** is an artist born in Finland and currently living in New York. She received a Master of Science in Visual Studies from MIT in 1999. She holds an MFA from the Academy of Fine Arts, Finland. She has presented her work in many countries, including the United Kingdom, the Nordic countries, South Korea, Poland, and the United States.

**Kristin Little** has an M.Arch. and M.C.P. from MIT and a background in development studies. She is currently researching slum improvement projects for a World Bank resource CD-ROM.

**Jennifer Mack** is a candidate in the dual MArch/MCP program at the MIT School of Architecture and Planning. She has a BA in Art and Architectural History from Wesleyan University.

**Jill Magid** is a candidate for a Master of Science in Visual Studies at the Department of Architecture of MIT and a Jaritz Fellow.

**Bruce Pearson**, an artist based in Brooklyn, NY, has worked professionally for 20 years, breaking into the mainstream New York art community in a Projects exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in 1996. Last fall, he presented his most recent body of works in his first solo exhibition entitled *A New Visual Language* at the Rose Art Museum in Brandeis University.





**Francesca Rogier** is a Visiting Lecturer at the Harvard Graduate School of Design and a doctoral candidate in the HTC program at MIT.

**Greg Russell** is an architect in Boston, MA. He holds degrees in architecture from MIT and the University of Virginia. His current interests relate to the "hidden" infrastructures of cities.

**Garry Stevens** is an Honorary Research Associate in the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Sydney, Australia. According to him, he is one of the world's very few architectural sociologists: "While they all beg to differ as to their conclusions, they nonetheless accept the necessity of their discipline and hope the reader shall take it likewise."

**Alexander Tzonis** is a Professor at the Technical Uninersity in Delft, Chair of Architectural Theory and Methods and also Director of Design Knowledge Systems, a multi-disciplinary research center in Architectural Cognition. He also taught at Harvard, Yale, Columbia Universities, MIT, and Technion Israel. His most recent books are *Santiago Calatrava, The Poetics of Movement* (Universe), and with Liane Lefaivre, *Aldo Van Eyck, Humanist Rebel* (010).

**Krzysztof Wodiczko** is an internationally renowned artist and Professor in the Visual Studies Program of the Department of Architecture at MIT, where he is also Director of the Interrogative Design Work Group at the Center for Advanced Visual Studies (CAVS). He has realized more than 70 Public Projections throughout the world and developed several public intervention instruments, like the *Homeless Vehicle*, 1988-89, *Alien Staff*, 1992, *Mouthpiece*, 1994, and *Aegis*, 1998. Wodiczko is recipient of the fourth Hiroshima Art Prize for his contribution to world peace.

# thresholds 20

be-longing

be-longing

**thresholds 20** will accept works that map the fusions and confusions between welcoming and barring, easing and controlling, and embracing and repulsing. We will explore defined and redefined physical and urban forms as they mediate the struggle between yearning for the past and imagining the future. We are especially interested in submissions that explore how experiences, representations, and mythologies articulate

| | |
|---|---|
| displacement | location |
| arrival | departure |
| shelter | exposure |
| translation | original |
| isolation | assimilation |
| drifting | waiting |
| strangers | locals |
| modernity | tradition |

In Indonesian, the word "merantau" means "to go out into the world and make one's way before returning home again." This process describes the intertwining and juxtaposition of the stranger and the local, as well as a disruption of the notion of "home."

At "home," there is an intrinsic notion of belonging: the right to be in a place, to own it, and to be connected to it. However, one's location in the world (being) may not necessarily relate to one's desires (longing). In this sense, home could imply the place or family left behind, a town, region, or nation state. Home could also be a place in the future, where dreams and expectations are realized.

"Homelands" unite diasporas across both real and imagined boundaries, and the powerful forces of heritage, tradition, and memory maintain and define this connectivity. Political and economic patterns of globalization erode borders but also produce enclaves, collective homes constructed by their inhabitants. The struggles and dialogues between "hosts" and "aliens" dynamically reformulate both groups in spatial as well as in social terms.

Jennifer Mack, editor

call for submissions

call for submissions

# thresholds 20

What can locality mean in a world where spatial localization, quotidian interaction, and social scale are not always isomorphic?
*-Arjun Appadurai*

Riveted to an elsewhere as certain as it is inaccessible, the foreigner is ready to flee. No obstacle stops him, and all suffering, all insults, all rejections are indifferent to him as he seeks that invisible and promised territory, that country that does not exist but that he bears in his dreams, and that must indeed be called a beyond.
*-Julia Kristeva*

Products of hyper-mobile capital and complex human migrations, perhaps the most visible characteristics of cities, are struggles over space, which are really two kinds of struggle: one a struggle of life space against economic space, the other a struggle over belonging. Who belongs where, and with what citizenship rights, in the emerging global cities?
*-Leonie Sandercock*

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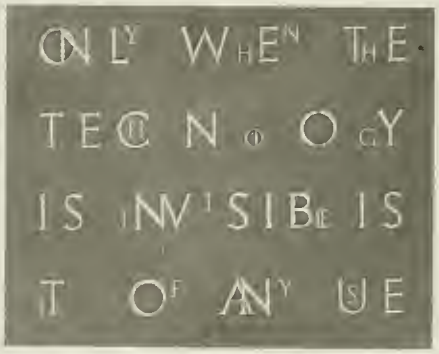
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